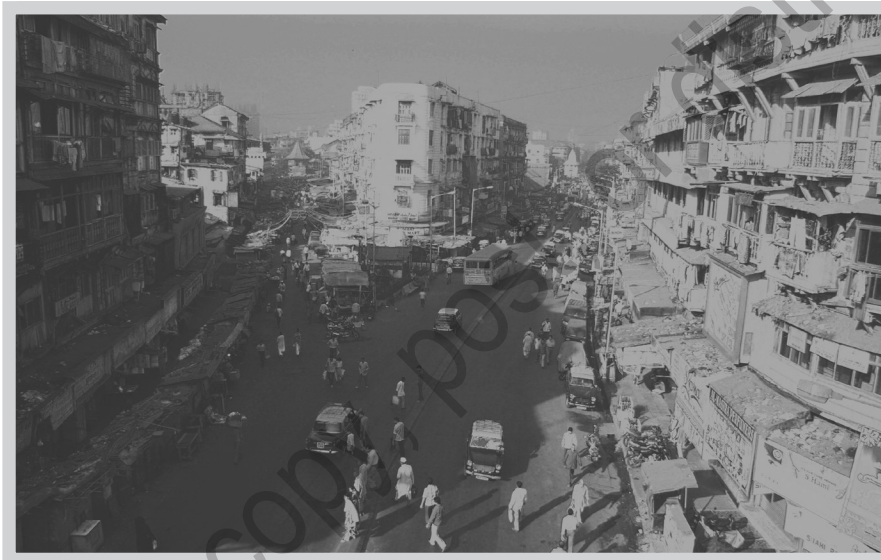


# 2

## Understanding the Context of Globalization



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How do you imagine life in Mumbai (Bombay), India, as different from or similar to your life?

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Describe the complex and contradictory influences of globalization on intercultural communication.
2. Explain the important role history plays in shaping intercultural communication today.
3. Explain how relationships of power impact intercultural communication in our everyday lives.
4. Identify the intercultural dimensions of economic, political, and cultural globalization.

**Scenario One:** In the hallway of a university in Southern California, three students—Hamza, an international student from Morocco; Cathy, who came to the United States four years ago from France; and Immaculee from Rwanda, who immigrated 17 years ago—spend the 15-minute break during their intercultural

communication class speaking with each other in French, relishing in the comfort that speaking a language of “home” offers and forming an intercultural relationship, however temporary and transitory. Why would they all speak French?

**Scenario Two:** In the fall of 2018, the United States–Mexico–Canada Agreement (USMCA) was signed by all three countries. USMCA, promoted by President Trump, is a revised and *rebranded* version of the 25-year-old **North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)**. In the 2019 State of the Union address, President Trump urged Congress to approve the USMCA, which he argued must replace “the catastrophe known as NAFTA” and “deliver for American workers like they have not had delivered to for a long time” (Kirby, 2019). Yet an independent government report issued by the International Trade Commission challenged the president’s claims, concluding that USMCA, the revised agreement “will offer modest benefits to the economy” (Swanson, 2019). What impact do trade agreements like USMCA have on you as a consumer? Who benefits?

**Scenario Three:** Which movie star is wealthier than Tom Cruise, George Clooney, or Johnny Depp? Many automatically think of a U.S. star, but the answer is Shah Rukh Khan, India’s most successful actor also known as “King Khan” and the “King of Bollywood.” Indian cinema is the largest film industry in the world with an annual production of nearly 2,000 films. Mumbai’s (Bombay) Hindi language film industry, Bollywood, is now a global phenomenon, where Shah Rukh Khan holds center stage. “He has a total of 279 awards in his lifetime career, including national and international awards. The French government has awarded him with three honours. His fans on social media are aplenty. The entire Bollywood salutes him” (Ashraf, 2019). Outside of Indian American communities, why are so few in the United States aware of this superstar?

**Scenario Four:** On March 19, 2019, over a million students from countries around the world—Europe, Africa, Asia, New Zealand, Australia, and South and North America—marched to protest government inaction on climate change. In over 2,000 protests in 125 countries, students expressed frustration and anger that adults have not acted to address the impending climate change disaster. A manifesto from the United Kingdom Climate Change Network states,

We’re young, we’re students, and we’re calling for change. Our movement started in February [2019], when tens of thousands of young people took to the streets in towns and cities around Britain, in an unprecedented emergence of a youth climate justice movement. We’ve joined a movement that is spreading rapidly around the world. (Glenza, Evans, & Zhou, 2019)

**Scenario Five:** Filipina American Grace Ebron recalls,

“I arrive at the Rome Airport, thrilled at the notion of living in Italy. As I step out of the customs hall, I immediately see my boyfriend, waiting to meet me. His parents, whom I’ve never met, are with him and as I turn to them with

my perfectly rehearsed Italian greeting, they appear very confused. ‘No- no’ they stammer, a perplexed expression on their faces. They turn to Massimo: ‘But where is your girlfriend—the American? Why did she send the maid?’” (Ebron, 2002).

What themes are interwoven through the fabric of all of these scenarios? Without erasing the obvious and more subtle differences between the situations, what common factors and forces shape the world that these scenarios describe? Hamza, Cathy, and Immaculee made personal journeys from different parts of the globe to the United States and found themselves relating to each other through a common language and connected to each other through a history of colonization. Through worldwide distribution of Hindi films, numerous websites, and social media, fans from around the world can stay up to date on Shah Rukh Khan’s latest public appearances and movies. Supported by rapid communication and transportation technologies, free-trade agreements like USMCA, the revised and rebranded NAFTA, create favorable conditions for corporations to trade goods, exchange intellectual property, and make profits. The youth climate justice movement was catalyzed by Greta Thunberg, a 16-year-old Swedish high school student who protested outside the Swedish Parliament demanding that the Swedish government reduce carbon emissions in accordance with the Paris Agreement. Her lone, persistent message—“school strike for climate”—attracted media attention and galvanized youth around the world. Forming intercultural alliances in unprecedented ways, youth activists are coordinating actions within and across nations, demanding that governments take steps on the global climate catastrophe and impending ecological collapse (Taylor, 2019). Grace Ebron, excited to reconnect with her Italian boyfriend, benefits from her global mobility and but is confronted with stereotypes and racialized assumptions due to colonial histories and the migration of Filipina laborers to Italy as part of a development policy based on the export of labor.

All the scenarios illustrate the dynamic movement, confluence, and interconnection of peoples, cultures, markets, and relationships of power that are rooted in history and yet are redefined and rearticulated in our current global age. Through advances in technology—both communication technology and transportation technology—and open markets, people from around the globe with different cultural, racial, national, economic, and linguistic backgrounds are coming into contact with each other; consuming each other’s cultural foods, products, and identities; developing relationships and struggling through conflicts; building alliances and activist networks; and laboring with and for each other more frequently, more intensely, and with greater impact today than ever before. In the workplace and the home, through entertainment and the Internet, in politics and the military, and through travel for leisure, work, pleasure, and survival, intercultural communication and interactions have become common, everyday experiences.

This chapter begins with an introduction of the central roles that history and power play in intercultural communication and explores the broader context of globalization within which intercultural communication occurs today. To grasp the complexity of globalization and the backlash to globalization, we examine facets of economic globalization, political globalization, and cultural globalization. Each facet is treated separately here to highlight the ways intercultural communication is integral to globalization. Yet these three facets of globalization are inextricably intertwined; thus, the interrelationship between economic, political, and cultural issues is also addressed.

## THE ROLE OF HISTORY IN INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Certainly, as we know from a study of history, for several millennia people have traveled and moved great distances exchanging cultural goods, ideas, and practices and experiencing significant intercultural contact. While both the Islamic and Mongol empires had broad reaches, Held, McGrew, Goldblatt, and Perraton (1999) noted in their book *Global Transformations: Politics, Economics and Culture* that the European conquest starting in the 16th century transformed global migration patterns in ways that continue to impact us today. During the European colonial era, people moved primarily from Europe, Spain, Portugal, and England but also from France, Holland, Belgium, and Germany to the Americas, Oceania, Africa, and Asia for the purpose of conquest, economic expansion, and religious conversion. Settlers from these countries then followed, reinforcing the flow from Europe to the outlying colonies. Between the 1600s and the 1850s, 9 to 12 million people were forcibly removed from Africa and transported to the colonies—primarily in the Americas—to serve as enslaved laborers during the transatlantic slave trade. In the 19th century, Indians (from the subcontinent of India) subjected to colonial British rule were relocated as laborers—often as indentured servants—to British colonies in Africa and Oceania. The process of colonization, which was based on the extraction of wealth through the exploitation of natural and human resources, established Europe as the economic and political center of the world and the colonies as the periphery (Young, 2001).

Later in the 19th century, after the British and Spanish colonies in the Americas had gained independence from colonial rule, a mass migration occurred with the expulsion of working-class and poor people from the economically stretched and famine-torn centers of Europe to the United States, Canada, and the Southern Cone, including Argentina, Chile, Brazil, Uruguay, and others. Movements of indentured laborers from Asia—primarily China, Japan, and the Philippines—to European colonies and former colonies—mainly the United States and Canada—swelled the number of migrants to over 40 million during the 25 years before World War I (WWI).

WWI brought the unprecedented closure of national borders and the implementation of the first systematic immigration legislation and border controls in modern times. The ethnically motivated violence of World War II (WWII) led to

the movement of Jews out of Europe to Israel, the United States, and Latin America. In the wake of unprecedented devastation of human lives, economies, and natural habitats experienced across Europe, Russia, and Japan as a result of WWII, the first institutions of global political and economic governance—the United Nations, the **World Bank (WB)**, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), and the **International Monetary Fund (IMF)**—were established. The **World Trade Organization (WTO)**, which replaced GATT in 1995, introduced major reforms to international trade, covering not only goods but also services and intellectual property.

Since the 1960s with the rebuilding of European economic power and the rise of the United States as an economic and political center, we have seen a shift in migratory patterns. While earlier periods saw the movement of peoples from the center of empires to the peripheries, increasingly, people from the former colonies or peripheries are migrating toward the centers of former colonial power. In search of jobs and in response to demands for labor, migrants move from Turkey and North Africa to Germany and France, respectively, and from more distant former colonies in Southeast Asia and East and West Africa to England, France, Germany, Italy, and the Scandinavian countries. The transatlantic migration from Europe to the United States at the turn of the 20th century is matched today by the numbers of immigrants from Latin America and Asia to the United States.

We also see flows of people to the oil-rich countries of the Middle East from Africa and Asia and new patterns of region-al migration within Latin America, Africa, and East Asia. In the last two decades, the numbers of people seeking asylum, refugees fleeing internally strife-stricken countries in the developing world, and more recently, those who have been displaced by war, persecution, and violence in Africa, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and Central America have risen. The number of forcibly displaced people rose to the highest level, with 79.5 million individuals displaced worldwide in 2019 (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2020). Today, South–South migration, or migration of people from countries in the Global South to other countries in the south, is as common as South–North migration. In 2019, India and Mexico were the countries with the largest number of people living outside their countries of origin in the global diaspora (United Nations Population Division, 2019).

As noted earlier, people have engaged in intercultural contact for many millennia, yet the European conquest starting in the 16th century transformed global migration patterns in ways that continue to impact intercultural relations today. The brief historical overview of world migrations since the colonial period reminds us that movements of people and therefore intercultural interactions are directly related to economic and political forces. It also suggests that intercultural misunderstanding and conflict occurring today between individuals, groups, or nations may be rooted deeply in histories of dispute, discrimination, and dehumanization. In addition, the brief overview points to how networks of connection and global relationships of power experienced today are a continuation of worldwide intercultural contact and interaction over the past 500 years.

# INTERCULTURAL PRAXIS

## HISTORICIZING THE FIELD OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

When engaging in intercultural praxis, framing is a process by which you zoom in and out using your analytical lens to understand a situation from micro-, meso-, and macro perspectives. While always partial and incomplete, the frame of reference we use can radically change the nature of “history” that we accept as true. The origin of the intercultural field traces back to several key anthropologists, most notably Edward T. Hall, who in the 1950s worked for the Foreign Service Institute training U.S. diplomats to communicate effectively in foreign countries. This “genesis” of the field is significant because growing U.S. hegemony after World War II and during the Cold War shaped the political context and motivation for the field.

The late awakening in the United States to the significance of global cultures points to its privileged positionality in the world as the emergent superpower. While the United States may have come to terms with the importance of cultural diplomacy in the post-WWII period, groups of people who were colonized by the West—indigenous peoples of the Americas, Africa, and Asia—had already been made aware of the significance of “cultural differences” marked by unequal colonial relations of power. Contextualizing the origin reveals how the development of the field was deeply intertwined with the cultural, social, economic, and political environment in the United States at that time (Sorrells & Sekimoto, 2016).

Therefore, to understand the dynamics of intercultural communication today, we must place them within a broad historical context. The process of colonization by Europe of much of the world, which included the exploitation of natural resources and human labor, established Europe and later the United States as the economic and political centers of the world. The colonial process initiated the division between “the West and the Rest” that we experience today. Figures 2.1 and 2.2 reflect the colonization and global expansion of the West that propelled the development of capitalism, which required then, and continues to require today, the expansion of markets and trade and the incorporation of labor from the former colonies, or what have been referred to as the Third World or developing countries (Dussel, 1995; Wallerstein, 2011).

**FIGURE 2.1** Colonized World in 1800

Source: Wikimedia Commons (2008a)

**FIGURE 2.2** Colonial Powers 1914

Source: Wikimedia Commons

The terms *First World*, *Second World*, and *Third World* are relics of the Cold War period and are concepts initially used to describe the relationship between the United States and other countries. The **First World** referred to countries friendly to the United States that were identified as capitalist and democratic. The **Second World** referred to countries perceived as hostile and ideologically incompatible with the United States, such as the former Soviet bloc countries, Cuba, China, and their allies, which were identified as communist. The **Third World** referred to countries that were seen as neutral or nonaligned with either the First World (capitalism) or the Second World (communism).

Although the relationship between the First World and Third World was ostensibly positive, the history of the last half of the 20th century reveals the so-called Third World as sites of anticolonial struggles and battlegrounds between the First and Second Worlds. Since the fall of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, the meaning of First and Third Worlds is less clearly defined and more closely associated with levels of economic development. The terms **developing country** and **developed country**, more commonly used today, are based on a nation's wealth (gross national product [GNP]), political and economic stability, and other factors. The terms **Global South** and **Global North**, also in usage today, highlight the socioeconomic and political division between wealthy, developed nations (former centers of colonial power) in the Northern Hemisphere and poorer developing nations (formerly colonized countries) in the Southern Hemisphere. As is evident, the labels, products of historical moments, are flawed and limited in their accuracy and represent a particular standpoint. As this book unfolds, significant historical periods that have shaped and continue to shape our world today, such as European colonization and the period immediately following WWII, will be discussed in greater depth.

## THE ROLE OF POWER IN INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Let's return to the scenarios again. While intercultural interactions can be engaging, delightful, informing, and even transformative, they are also often challenging, stressful, contentious, and conflicting. What else can we say about these scenarios? What other themes or threads are evident? Are Hamza, Cathy, and Immaculee positioned equally in terms of power? Are their claims of "French-ness" the same? Are they likely to experience similar or different receptions from people in the United States based on race, nation of origin, gender, class, religion, and the elevated anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim rhetoric today? Are the United States, Canada, and Mexico positioned equally in terms of political and economic power? Are international business relations influenced by these inequities? Well, sure, most of us would answer. Therefore, it is important to consider the impact on intercultural relations when the people communicating come from different and inequitable positions of power.

Have you heard of Shah Rukh Khan? If you said, "no," you are not alone among people from the United States. Khan, or "King Khan" as he is affectionately known, is one of the biggest movie stars in cinematic history and enjoys worldwide renown. So how, in this global age with highly advanced mass communication technology, is it that so few Americans outside the Indian American community know about this superstar? While Bollywood (the film industry in India is primarily centered in Mumbai and is often referred to as "Bollywood," a melding of the city's colonial name, Bombay, with Hollywood) produces over 1,700 feature films per year, roughly two and a half times more than Hollywood, and reaches a larger audience worldwide, U.S. films continue to dominate the U.S. market. Why do you think that is?

Scientists first identified the Earth's "greenhouse effect" nearly 200 years ago, and consensus among scientists emerged in the 1980s regarding the impact of



human-made carbon emissions on global warming. As of 2019, 194 countries and the European Union have signed the Paris Agreement, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, intended to “strengthen the global response to climate change” (United Nations Climate Change, n.d., para. 2). Yet in the United States, climate change deniers or skeptics have used media to significantly influence public opinion on climate change, and in 2017, President Trump announced the United States would withdraw from the agreement as soon as legally possible. What explains this vast difference between the United States and the global community regarding climate change? Who funds campaigns to spread doubt and deny climate change and whose interests are served by?

In our study of intercultural communication in the context of globalization, we must consider how global movements of people, products, cultural forms, and cultural representations as well as responses to global challenges such as climate change are shaped and controlled by relationships of power. What and who is controlling positions and practices of power, and how have these power relationships been established? For example, it is

## INTERCULTURAL PRAXIS

### COMMUNICATION AND POWER

Intercultural praxis is a kind of exercise—both mental and embodied—to investigate and transform unequal relations of power embedded in our culture. Power can be conceptualized as a constraining and enabling force that regulates culture and communication. Power may be physical (i.e., violence and coercion) or ideological (i.e., persuasion and representation). The concept of power implies that the world as we know it is not neutral or natural. Rather, the world as we know and understand it is constructed and regulated by people throughout history. Thus, intercultural communication both produces and reflects relations of power.

The six ports of entry into intercultural praxis allow us to investigate the way our culture and communication are regulated and constrained by physical and ideological power. You may inquire who produces knowledge and regulates social relations, examine your position of privilege or disadvantage in relation to other cultural groups, and understand how your frame of reference is shaped by relations of power. At the same time, intercultural praxis is about using our power to enable more equitable and socially just relationships across different cultures by engaging in dialogue, reflection, and informed, socially responsible action.

important for us to ask about and investigate the media giants who shape the content and the distribution of news, information, and popular culture. How are political and economic policies and decisions impacted in a world where the top 1% control as much wealth as the remaining 99%? How are people-driven movements, such as the Global Strike for Climate Justice, #MeToo movement, United We Dream, the largest immigrant youth-led community of activist in the United States, and the Zapatista movement for indigenous rights in Chiapas, Mexico, among many others building power bases, independently and together, to challenge global capitalism, imagine alternatives, and bring about social change? In later chapters, we delve into how differences in power between individuals, groups, nations, and global regions have come about historically and what trends we see for the future.

## **INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBALIZATION**

As illustrated in the five scenarios, the context of globalization within which intercultural communication occurs is characterized by the following:

- An increasingly dynamic, mobile world facilitated by communication and transportation technologies, accompanied by an intensification of interaction and exchange between people, cultures, and cultural forms across geographic, cultural, and national boundaries
- A rapidly growing global interdependence socially, economically, politically, and environmentally, which leads to shared interests, needs, and resources together with greater tensions, contestations, and conflicts
- A magnification of inequities based on flows of capital, labor, and access to education and technology, as well as the increasing power of multinational corporations and global financial institutions
- A historical legacy of colonization, Western domination, and U.S. hegemony that continues to shape intercultural relations today

These characteristics of globalization point to the centrality of intercultural communication as a fundamental force shaping our current age. In face-to-face interactions, our differences across cultures in values, norms, verbal and nonverbal communication, and communication styles often lead to misunderstanding and misperceptions. Our assumptions and attitudes based on differences in physical appearance—socially constructed as racial, gender, class, and religious systems—frequently condition our responses and shape who we communicate with, build friendships and alliances with, in addition to who we avoid, exclude, and engage in conflict with. The increased exposure today through interpersonal and mediated communication to people who differ

from ourselves deeply impacts how we make sense of, constitute, and negotiate our own identities as well as the identities of others. Additionally, histories of conflict between [among] groups, structural inequities that are rooted in the past and exacerbated today, along with ideological differences frequently frame and inform our intercultural interactions.

**Globalization** refers to the complex web of forces and factors that have brought people, cultures, cultural products, and markets, as well as beliefs and practices, into increasingly greater proximity to and interrelationship with one another within inequitable relations of power. The word *globalization* is used here to address both the processes that contribute to and the conditions of living in a world where advances in technology have brought the world's people spatially and temporally closer together; where economic and political forces of advanced capitalism and neoliberalism have increased flows of products, services, and labor across national boundaries; and where cultural, economic, and political ideologies "travel" not only through overt public campaigns but through mass media and social media, consumer products, and global institutions, such as the WB, the IMF, and the WTO. For many, the conditions of living in a globalized world include elevated uncertainty, polarization, and tension. Increased migration and displacement, magnified economic inequity and insecurity, as well as real and perceived ethnic, racial, and religious tension have led to a backlash against globalization in recent years. Anti-immigrant, protectionist, and populist rhetoric and policies, fueled by job insecurity, xenophobia, and long histories of racism, have given rise to new forms of ethnic nationalism, isolationism, and violence around the world.

I recognize that globalization is an extremely complex concept and perhaps the ideas and vocabulary used here are new to you. For that reason, in the following pages, I "deconstruct" the main forces and factors that contribute to globalization while addressing the consequences of globalization for people's lived experiences and for intercultural communication. As the book progresses, we explore together the multiple and layered meanings of the word and how globalization is understood differently by people and groups with different interests, positionalities, and standpoints.

While the term *globalization* came into common usage in the 1990s, the various factors or forces that constitute globalization have been in play for a much longer time. To make sense of this rather unwieldy and highly contested concept, we examine three interrelated facets of globalization: (1) economic globalization, (2) political globalization, and (3) cultural globalization. Throughout the three sections that follow, the intercultural communication dimensions are highlighted and the interconnection between the three facets is noted.

## **INTERCULTURAL DIMENSIONS OF ECONOMIC GLOBALIZATION**

In the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) described at the beginning of the chapter, what intercultural challenges and benefits can you imagine when multicultural and multinational teams from these three countries engage in business?

Why have U.S., European, and Japanese corporations established export production centers, or **maquiladoras**, in Mexico over the last 25 years and more recently in Central America? When a Japanese multinational corporation is located in India and employs people from Japan, India, and the UK (United Kingdom), what intercultural issues are likely to arise? How do cultural differences in values, norms, and assumptions play out when Filipinas leave their homes and country out of economic necessity to work in the homes of middle- and upper-class families in Italy as introduced in Scenario Five? What role do history and relationships of power play in the lives of approximately 10 million Filipinos who endure tremendous hard ship as overseas workers in Europe, the Middle East, the United States, and Singapore?

### Global Business and Global Markets

**Economic globalization**—characterized by a growth in multinational corporations; an intensification of international trade and international flows of capital; and internationally interconnected webs of production, distribution, and consumption—has increased intercultural interaction and exchange exponentially. To get a sense of how you are situated within this web of economic globalization, think about your daily activities, the products and services you consume, and your future goals and dreams. Your smartphone, for example, that wakes you every morning and connects you instantly to your world likely contains raw materials mined in Africa, components from Taiwan, South Korea, Japan, Philippines, Vietnam, China, and Singapore and is assembled in China often under exploitative working conditions. Take a look at the labels on your clothes or shoes. Where does the raw material come from, where were the products made, and under what conditions? How far did the gasoline used to fuel your mode of transportation travel to reach you? Given the climate crisis, why are we still so petroleum dependent? How have your job prospects and wages changed since your parents' generation? When you dial customer service or answer a telemarketing call, what country does the person live in who is talking to you? Will you live and work in your country of origin? With whom will you work, and how will cultural differences impact your workplace?

By considering these questions, you begin to see how economic globalization has magnified the need for intercultural awareness, understanding, and training at all levels of business. Cultural differences in values, norms, and behaviors play a significant role in team building, decision making, job satisfaction, and marketing and advertising, as well as many other aspects of doing business in the context of economic globalization. Some intercultural misunderstandings are rather humorous and others disturbing; however, they point to the difficulties of “translating” business practices, products, and markets across cultures. For example, when Coca-Cola was first introduced in China with thousands of advertising signs, the company named the product by approximating the sound, ke-kou-ke-la, in Chinese characters, yet the meaning translated to “bite the wax tadpole” or, depending on dialect, “female horse stuffed with wax.” After considerable research, the Chinese characters representing the produce were changed to a more

suitable meaning—“happiness in the mouth.” Many viewers who saw the Facebook ad for Dove body wash that showed a black woman removing a brown shirt that sequenced to a white woman removing a light shirt read the ad as evoking long-used racial tropes of “cleansing” or “whitening.” While intended to celebrate diversity, according to a company spokesperson, the ad had the opposite effect and was immediately pulled (Aster, 2017).

As amusing and horrifying as intercultural mistakes can be, they are also often costly. Researcher and marketing expert at Sejong University in South Korea, Choe Yong-shik criticizes the use of “Konglish” in corporate slogans, arguing that it damages the image of Korean companies. “The more they invest in marketing overseas, the worse their image may become,” referring to the awkward use of Korean cultural values translated into English phrases (Kitae & Staines, 2005). Anticipating the intercultural challenge every multinational communicator must solve, former West German chancellor Willy Brandt stated, “If I’m selling to you, I speak your language. If I’m buying, *dann müssen Sie Deutsch sprechen*” (as cited in Nurden, 1997, p. 39).

The examples direct our attention to the intercultural dimensions of economic globalization. Languages are complex and nuanced repositories of culture. Languages, both verbal and nonverbal, convey meanings about the values, beliefs, and assumptions of a culture. Translation across cultures can lead to confusion, misunderstanding, and communication failures if the culture as a system of meaning, as discussed in Chapter 1, is not understood. The confluence and interplay of languages in the global context also leads to hybrid forms, such as *Konglish* and *Spanglish*, which challenge shared systems of meanings within cultures and introduce what may be viewed as “outside” and “undesirable” influences. The former West German chancellor’s statement, “If I’m selling to you, I speak your language. If I’m buying, *then you must speak German*,” demonstrates how language and language use are intricately interwoven with relationships of power. The common reference to hybrid languages (*Konglish*, *Spanglish*, *Hinglish*, etc.) also points to the hegemony of English as a global language, which, through the proliferation of the language, shapes perceptions, values, and perspectives globally.

As we have seen, advances in technology—both communication and transportation technology—have enabled the growth of multinational corporations, an increased global interconnection in the production of goods and services, and the distribution of products through global markets. What other forces combine with advances in technology to define economic globalization?

## Free Trade and Economic Liberalization

Shifts in international economic policies since WWII and most markedly since the 1990s have dramatically increased the movement of capital (money), commodities (products), -services, information, and labor (people) around the globe. A primary factor propelling these economic shifts is **economic liberalization**, also known as trade liberalization, or free trade. Broadly speaking, what this means is that the movement of goods, labor, services, and capital is increasingly unrestricted by tariffs (taxes) and trade

barriers. Historically, taxes and tariffs on foreign products and services were put in place by national governments to protect the jobs, prices, and industries of a nation-state. The countries we consider today as developed nations, or First World nations, used protectionist policies (taxation of foreign-made products and services) until they accumulated enough wealth to benefit from free trade. In fact, until the last 35 to 45 years, the United States opposed “free-trade” policies in an effort to protect U.S. jobs, products, and services (Stiglitz, 2002). What we saw in the 1990s and 2000s, however, was the promotion and support of **free-trade agreements** by the United States and other First World nations, which liberalized trade by reducing trade tariffs and barriers transnationally while maintaining protection for some of their own industries. **Neoliberalism** is an economic and political theory—a new kind of liberalism—promoting free trade, privatization of natural resources (water, natural gas, air) and institutions (education, health care, prisons, the military, and security), reliance on the individual and minimal government intervention or support for social services. The use of the term “liberalism” is often confused with the term “liberal,” which refers to people who support progressive reform. In fact, neoliberal policies and people who identify as “liberal” are most often at opposite ends of ideological spectrums in relation to political and economic policies.

As a result of neoliberalism, economic liberalization, and free trade along with advances in transportation and communication technologies, manufacturing sectors and, more recently, service sectors of the economy have moved offshore or outside the geographic boundaries of the corporate ownership’s country of origin. In search of cheaper labor, few if any labor and environmental regulations, and tax breaks, U.S.-based multinational corporations—as well as corporations based in other First World nations, such as Europe, Australia, Canada, and Japan—have relocated their sites of production to Mexico, Central America, China, and countries in Asia such as Vietnam, Singapore, and the Philippines. In addition, corporations in search of ways to expand their markets turn to populations in other countries. As a result, almost all business transactions today have an intercultural component.

The signing of the NAFTA by Canada, Mexico, and the United States in January 1994, was one of the boldest experiments in free trade or economic liberalization supporting the free movement of goods, services, and capital without trade or tariff barriers. Nearly three decades after the experiment of NAFTA, the first of many free-trade agreements, was initiated, the implications of its policies remain highly controversial and contested. As you can imagine, people with varying standpoints, positionalities, and interests have judged its success or failure differently. Communication about the free-trade agreement on corporate and governmental websites, in the news, in face-to-face interactions, and at protest sites differs greatly based on its impact on people’s lives and livelihood. Mr. Trump, as a presidential candidate and as president, rallied vocally against NAFTA as a “disaster” (Restuccia, Palmer, & Behsudi, 2018) and promised to “terminate NAFTA entirely” (Canadian Press, 2018). He claims that the agreement was “unfair” to the United States and that the new **United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA)** signed by the three countries in -fall 2018 is the remedy (Trump, 2018). Yet as economist and former

senior vice president of the World Bank, Joseph Stiglitz (2017) noted, the United States has gotten most of what it has negotiated for in trade agreements. The issue is that what U.S. negotiators asked for serves the interests of corporations, not most Americans—the average working- or middle-class person.

While often touted as beneficial for all, free trade agreements such as NAFTA or its replacement USMCA impact corporations, governments, workers, and consumers very differently. Free trade agreements, which are central to neoliberal globalization, generally create lower prices for consumer goods and services as multinational corporations move production to developing countries where costs for labor and environmental protections are much lower. People in developed countries enjoy the benefits of lower prices on consumer products; however, stable working- and middle-class jobs—those in manufacturing and service sectors—are lost, and labor unions are weakened. While job opportunities increase in developing countries, working conditions are often dismal and workers often do not have the buying power to purchase the consumer good they produce. Generally, corporations benefit through increased profits, as do elites in both developed and developing countries, which further reinforces economic inequities within and across nations.

Clearly, economic globalization and the policies of free trade have dramatically accelerated the amount and intensity of intercultural communication. Individuals, families, institutions, and businesses as well as nations are increasingly interwoven into complex webs of intercultural relations. Using intercultural praxis, we can see how the economic context, the broader macro-frame, propels and shapes intercultural interactions between groups, visible through the meso-frame, and between [among] individuals, when we shift to the micro frame. It is also critical to underscore how different actors on the global stage—governments, multinational corporations, labor union representatives and factory workers, farmers, and environmental and citizen rights groups—are positioned differently; thus, their experience with, frame for, and meaning-making about economic globalization are vastly different.

### Global Financial Institutions and Popular Resistance

The global youth climate justice movement introduced in Scenario Four echoes other movements such as Occupy Wall Street, and the Alter-Globalization or Global Justice movement that came to the world's attention during the protests against the WTO in Seattle, Washington, in November 1999, where over 40,000 people from around the globe, representing a wide variety of groups and interests, rallied together to challenge the decision-making power of the WTO. In addition to concerns by union organizers about competition from cheaper labor abroad and worries by labor groups about bad working conditions in other countries, environmental activists were deeply disturbed by the unregulated outsourcing of pollution—just as the youths in the global climate movement are today. While dismissed and mocked in the interim, twenty years after the Seattle Protest many of the protesters' criticisms of free trade have proven true (Smith, 2014). Global financial institutions, GATT (now the WTO), IMF, and the WB, which were set

up immediately following WWII to maintain global economic stability and to address poverty through development, may seem quite distant from your everyday life. However, these three organizations are the primary institutions on a macro, global level governing economic globalization, which affect the price you pay for consumer goods, your job opportunities, and your future on the planet as the students in the global youth climate movement emphatically state.

Economic globalization, spearheaded by free-trade agreements that are often mandated by the IMF, financed by the WB, and negotiated and monitored by the WTO, certainly has led to increased intercultural business transactions and economic interdependence internationally. From a business perspective, individuals and companies must become effective in communicating interculturally in order to participate and compete in global markets. Multinational corporations are by nature composed of people from different national and cultural backgrounds who are accustomed to “doing business” differently, not to mention the range of languages, managerial styles, work ethics, negotiating styles, and marketing practices brought together in multinational and multicultural teams.

The integration of global markets within and across developing and developed countries offers some individuals and groups opportunities to increase their wealth. Large numbers of people, particularly in China and India, have moved out of poverty as a result of integrated global markets. However, economic globalization and the policies of neoliberalism have resulted in increased economic disparities between the wealthy and the poor not only globally but within the United States and have magnified economic stratification based on race and gender (Kochhar & Cilluffo, 2018; Stiglitz, 2019; also see Figure 2.3).

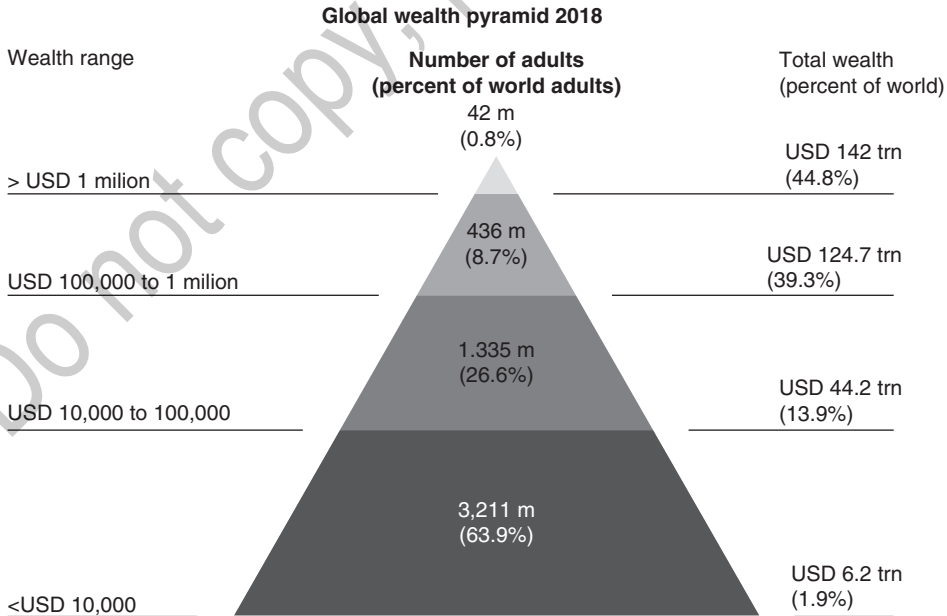
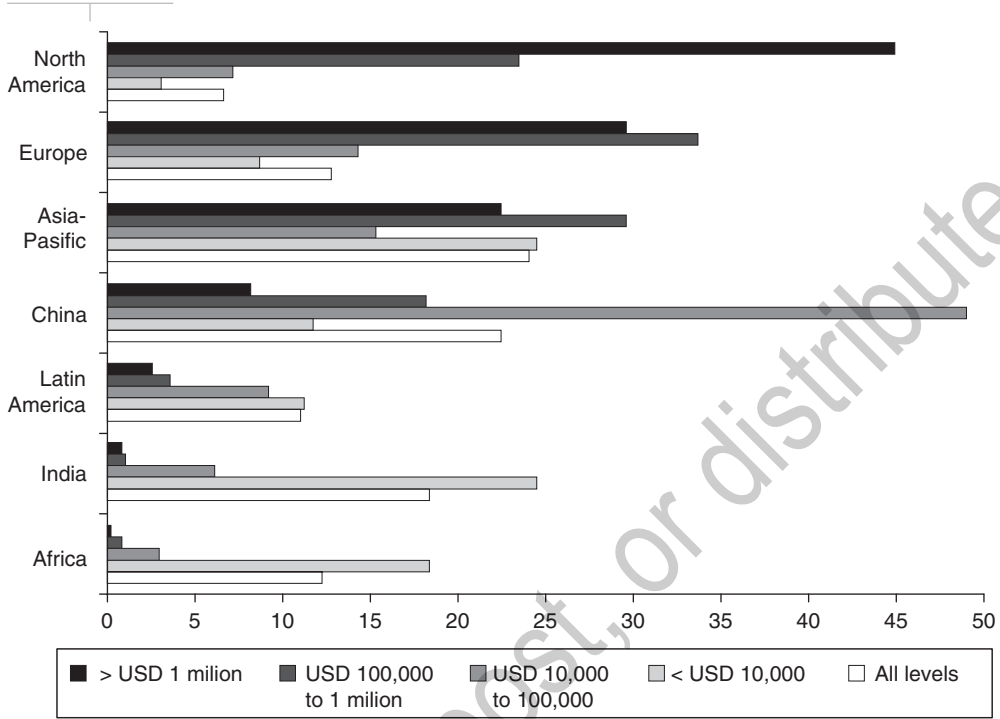
After this brief discussion, we see more clearly how economic globalization and neoliberalism intensify the need for intercultural communication as regions, groups, and nations are integrated—by choice or force—into global markets. Economic liberalization and free-trade agreements increase economic interdependence and propel migration around the world creating intercultural collaboration and conflict. We also see how economic globalization magnifies the gap between the wealthy and the poor exacerbating economic stratification in the United States based on race and gender. Accelerated economic integration, increased migration, and growing wealth disparities go hand in hand with political policies, political rhetoric, and political interests. As political and economic agendas coalesce and collide, people and cultures are deeply impacted. In the next section, the political dimensions of globalization are explored and the impact on intercultural communication is discussed.

## **INTERCULTURAL DIMENSIONS OF POLITICAL GLOBALIZATION**

As global economic interdependence over the past 30 years has resulted in increased inequities, distrust of ruling elites, and insecurity about the present and future, a backlash against and retreat from globalization has taken hold in nation-state politics characterized by trends of protectionism, ethnic nationalism, and authoritarianism. Brexit (Britain + Exit), the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union, exemplifies the rejection of globalizing and integrating forces, the mistrust of the ruling class, and a desire to return to the sovereignty of the nation-state. The slogans of Brexit supporters, “We



**FIGURE 2.3** Global Wealth Distribution by Population and Region



Source: James Davies, Rodrigo Lluberas and Anthony Shorrocks, Credit Suisse Global Wealth Databook 2018

Want Our Country Back,” “Refugees Not Welcome,” “Let’s Take Back Control,” and “EU Rats Go Home Now,” are telling. The slogans express a sense of loss of control, ownership, and belonging from the point of view of the dominant group and target people perceived as “other”—migrants and refugees. Undergirded by **xenophobia**—defined as the fear of outsiders—and deep-seated racism, similar populist movements rooted in ethnic nationalism have surfaced in Europe, the United States, Australia, and other parts of the world. While trends emerged in the early decades of globalization toward democratization, or at least toward market-driven democratization, closely linked to free-trade agreements and the agendas of the WTO, the WB, and the IMF, we now see counter moves toward authoritarianism worldwide enforced by growing violence and militarism. We also see an increase in global justice movements and networks of local social justice organizations addressing intersectional issues that affect people’s everyday lives and imagining another world based on social, political, and economic justice.

### Ethnonationalism, Authoritarianism, and Militarism

After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the collapse of the former Soviet Union in 1990, and the end of the Cold War, a widely held belief coalesced that liberal democracy and capitalism went hand in hand to bring about both national and global prosperity and peace. Harvard political scientist Samuel Huntington (1993) documented a global trend toward democratization since WWII. While the concept and practice of democracy are contested, **democratization** in this case refers to the transition from an authoritarian to a democratic political system that ensures the universal right to vote. A correlation between free-market capitalism and democratic governance exists, yet research and experience also provide ample evidence that the two are in conflict with one another. True free-market capitalism inevitably results in inequitable distribution of wealth and resources, which is fundamentally undemocratic and tends to produce tension and unrest that destabilizes democracies (Ingraham, 2020).

A decade after the Occupy Wall Street movement, the central message of economic inequities between the very wealthy 1% and the rest of the 99% has gained mainstream traction, animating progressive politicians in the United States such as Senator Bernie Sanders and advancing policy ideas such as the \$15 minimum wage and free college campaigns. Yet in the context of neoliberal globalization, conservative, right-wing politicians have also mobilized the anger, discontent, and resentment regarding economic inequity targeting immigrants and people of color for the failures of globalization. Similar to the slogans of Brexit supporters, the Trump campaign and presidency rely heavily on rhetoric that equates immigrants with criminality, carnage, and savage invasion, tapping into deeply held racialized fears and resentments of the “other.” President Trump’s slogan, “Make America Great Again,” panders to a sense of loss and being left behind economically, politically, and culturally that resonates with some Americans. The slogan evokes a nostalgic return to a time in the past when things were better. But it’s important to ask the question: better for whom? “Make America Great Again” functions as a dog-whistle for White nationalism. A **dog-whistle** is a coded message communicating particular meanings to certain groups that can also be

defended as legitimate to others. Dog-whistles produce high-frequency sounds that can be heard by dogs and not humans. Thus, used metaphorically in a political context, statements like “Make American Great Again” are dog-whistles heard by disaffected White Americans as signs of support and approval for White nationalism while also defended by politicians, specifically President Trump, as legitimate calls to rebuild America.

**Ethnonationalism** also known as ethnic nationalism is a form of nationalism based specifically on ethnicity. For ethnonationalists, the defining characteristic of a nation-state is understood as shared ethnic heritage, bloodline or “race,” language, religion, or ancestry. Thus, adherents to White nationalism believe White identity should be the unifying principle of Western countries and they seek to reverse demographic changes as a way to preserve a White majority (Beirich, 2019). While ethnonationalism is clearly on the rise in Europe and the United States, the trend is not solely in Western countries; rather, a wave of ethnonationalism has currently inundated many parts of the world in a diverse array of countries, including Turkey, India, Brazil, and Myanmar.

Despite the promises or perhaps, precisely because of the unfulfilled promises of liberal capitalism and democracy for universal prosperity and individual human rights, we are living in “the age of anger” as defined by public intellectual Pankaj Mishra (2016), where “authoritarian leaders manipulate the cynicism and discontent of furious majorities.” The French word *ressentiment*, translated in English as *resentment*, is a complex and layered emotion of intense envy, humiliation, and powerlessness where hostility is directed at individuals or groups seen as the cause of one’s frustration and anger. Mishra (2016) noted that *ressentiment* has grown in proportion to the spread of liberal democratic principles of equality and that individualism and has become particularly pronounced today because of deepening contradictions:

The ideals of modern democracy—the equality of social conditions and individual empowerment—have never been more popular. But they have become more and more difficult, if not impossible, to actually realise in the grotesquely unequal societies created by our brand of globalised capitalism. (Mishra, 2016, “The Problem,” para. 5)

Thus, authoritarian leaders across the globe arouse and harness populous anger, discontent, and resentment—responses to the contradictory conditions of neoliberal globalization—to advance ethnonationalist movements predicated on anti-immigrant and anti-democratic rhetoric, practices, and policies. For example, Prime Minister of Hungary, Viktor Orbán, a self-described populist and leader of the far-right Fidesz party in Hungary, has dramatically altered democratic institutions and norms since reclaiming the prime minister role in 2010. He campaigned and won a fourth term victory in April 2018 on a nationalist, anti-Muslim immigrant, and anti-Jewish agenda after systematically undermining political opponents by changing election rules, consolidating state media loyal to him, and radically changing the courts to give the executive branch power over the judiciary (Pascus, 2019). Eerily similar indicators of the rising threat of authoritarianism and decline of democracy in the United States include President Trump’s ongoing criticism

**PHOTO 2.1**  
Birmingham  
Climate Justice  
Strike, Birmingham,  
England, 2020



Mike Kemp/Contributor/Getty Images

For the past four decades, the United States, under the leadership of both political parties, has systematically militarized the southern border, criminalized migrants, and created repressive conditions in communities such that the U.S.–Mexico border has become one of the most militarized in the world. **Militarization** refers to the process of a society organizing itself for military conflict and the use of violence. In earlier decades, the build-up on the U.S.–Mexico border was framed as part of the “war on drugs,” then “the war on crime,” and more recently “the war on terror.” Pedro Rios, director of American Friends Service Committee’s U.S.–Mexico Border Program, noted, “When we talk about border militarization, it’s no exaggeration—there are real, palpable aspects of enforcement that are militaristic in nature. And they are often lobbied for by private corporations that profit from these policies” (Bolante, 2017). The militarization of the border similar to the militarization of the police in the United States and around the world advances militaristic rhetoric, policies, practices, tactics, and equipment to address social issues, which normalizes a culture of violence, erosion of civil liberties, and the violation of human rights.

The rise in ethnonationalism, authoritarianism, and militarism globally is marked by hateful, dehumanizing, and violent rhetoric and policies that scapegoat immigrants, women, and people of color, as well as religious and sexual minorities. Increased economic inequity resulting from neoliberal globalization has created a political arena where those most disadvantaged economically are now targeted as the “problem,” or cause of discontent. While the specter of the “Other” has long been used to incite anxiety, fear, and hatred, the conditions are particularly ripe to edge democracies toward more authoritarian forms of governance in subtle and more blatant ways.

## Ideological Wars

**Ideology** is defined as a set of ideas and beliefs reflecting the needs and aspirations of individuals, groups, classes, or cultures that form the basis for political, economic, and other systems. Dominant ideologies include beliefs about gender, race, class, religion, and nation as well as the economy, politics, and the environment. For example, for the past 25 years dominant ideologies regarding globalization have characterized it as an opening

of media as “the enemy of the people,” his disregard for the co-equal and separate powers of the three branches of government, and his assault on the rule of law. With Prime Minister Orbán’s visit to the White House in May 2019, *New York Times* columnist David Leonhardt (2019) noted, “Trump is using the presidency to enhance the global standing of authoritarianism.”

of borders and markets for the unfettered flow of products, ideas, capital, labor, and people across national boundaries. Proponents of this version of globalization—global leaders and corporate elites—argued globalization was beneficial for everyone. But nearly three decades later, there are clear winners and losers in the project of neoliberal globalization. Emerging populous leaders are now positioning migrants and immigrants in the center of the battle blaming them for the ills of globalization. This shifting narrative identifies a target of discontent for those who are losing out and deflects attention from those who gain. The term **ideological wars** refers to clashes or conflicts between differing belief systems that are used to strategically advance certain interests.

From the post-WWII era until the fall of the former Soviet Union in 1990, the pivotal ideological war occupying the United States imaginary and shaping U.S. foreign policy was the “Cold War,” framed as a struggle of capitalism/democracy over or against communism/totalitarianism. Since then and particularly post-9/11, U.S. leaders have waged the “war on terror,” which President George W. Bush coined following the September 11th attacks in 2001, as a fight not only for America’s freedoms but the world’s freedoms (Bush, 2001). While espousing tolerance and pluralism, President Bush repeatedly used “us vs. them” rhetoric playing on narratives of a clash between Western and Islamic civilizations. He later described the war on terror as a “crusade,” evoking the Holy Wars in the 11th century when Muslims were depicted as a threat to Western Christendom (Kumar, 2012). In an effort to de-escalate inflammatory anti-Islamic rhetoric and reject the notion of a clash of civilizations, President Barak Obama used the term *extremist* to refer to specific terrorist groups. But in his first address to Congress in 2017, President Trump intensified his rhetoric to “radical, Islamic, terrorism,” falsely conflating Islam, as a religion with “terrorism.” Described by President Trump and his inner circle as a political–religious ideological war threatening Judeo-Christian civilization, values, and liberal democracy, the war on “radical Islamic terrorism” has been framed as the defining struggle of our time (Friedman, 2017).

The ideological war on terror spanning the first two decades of the new millennium is a multifaceted campaign of nearly limitless scope. While ideological wars are struggles over competing belief systems, they have very real consequences and costs in terms of human lives, resources, and rights. The war on Terror has been used to advance major increases in U.S. military spending, the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq, covert operations in Yemen and other countries in the Middle East, the detention of accused enemy combatants without trial at Guantánamo Bay, the incursion on civil liberties through the U.S. Patriot Act, the development of new security institutions such as the Department of Homeland Security, and the wide-reaching surveillance and intelligence-gathering powers of the National Security Administration (NSA). According to Brown University’s Institute for International and Public Affairs *Cost of War* report, the United States has spent nearly \$6 trillion on the war on terror, more than 500,000 people have died directly from the violence, several times that many have died indirectly from the wars and millions of people have been displaced as refugees (Crawford, 2019).

Others argue the most pressing ideological war facing the world today is the rise of authoritarianism and autocracy, which is threatening liberal democracies across Europe, Asia, and in the United States **liberal democracy** refers to a form of governance that

values individual rights and human rights, the rule of law, free and fair elections, checks and balances in the government, and civilian control over the military. Global democratic freedoms are on the decline while autocratic capitalism in countries such as China, Russia, and Saudi Arabia is on the rise. The IMF reported that given current trends, within the next five years “autocratic countries will account for more than half of global income for the first time in more than a century” (Kempe, 2019, para. 1). Congressional Representative Adam Schiff, the highest ranking Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, summarized the concern:

It’s not solely an issue of Russia’s hacking into our election; as serious and as staggering as that was, it’s not simply the relationship between Trump and Putin, but rather, I think we are in a new war of ideas, in which autocracy appears to be on the march, and we have to confront it. We need really strong leadership in the free world. You see in many parts of Europe a retreat to nationalism, a de-emphasis on human rights. You see in the countries of our NATO allies the imprisoning of journalists. We’re seeing an awful turn away from representative government, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law, . . . And there’s a lot to be concerned about. (Glasser, 2017, para. 41)

Ideological wars frame issues in the public arena in ways that profoundly affect intercultural communication in people’s everyday lives. Ideological battles often employ false dichotomies—requiring adherence to a belief in freedom versus adherence to Islam or immigrant rights versus national unity—to galvanize the public while obscuring the complexities and nuances of intercultural issues. Rhetoric that emerges from ideological wars often scapegoats one group—for example, Muslims or immigrants—for the challenges and ills of the world, or a society, instilling and perpetuating prejudices and animosity as well as inciting violence between cultural groups.

### Global Governance and Social Movements

One of the critical issues of globalization in the 21st century is the question of governance. Questions of governance on global, national, state, and local levels are closely linked to intercultural communication. Who is at the table, literally and figuratively, when decisions that affect people close by and in the far reaches of the world are made? Whose voices are represented, and whose interests are served? What standpoints and positionalities are silenced or dismissed? Whose language, ideologies, political processes, and economic system dominate? Whose rules, behaviors, communication styles, values, and beliefs are privileged and normalized? As Stiglitz (2017) noted in his *Globalization and Its Discontents Revisited*,

Globalization has long been governed by the developed countries for their interests—and most especially for the financial and corporate interest within those countries. . . . The disparity between the economic realities of the twenty-first century and governance structures created in 1944 for the World Bank and the IMF have become increasingly evident, even more so after 2008. (p. 361)

Change has been slow, however. The G7 or Group of Seven, an annual meeting of international leaders composed of the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Canada, Italy, and Japan, mainly addresses global political issues. The G20 (now 19 countries plus the European Union), which includes both advanced and emerging economies, manages the global economy. Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the United States, and the European Union have been added to the G7 group of nations when addressing economic issues, which is clearly more inclusive; nevertheless, representation regarding global political issues is still very limited and exclusive and for smaller nations with over a third of the world's population, representation is absent.

Yet individuals, groups, and organizations are coming together across national, ethnic, and cultural lines to form intercultural alliances that challenge the domination of global financial and political institutions and work together to create alternatives to racial, ethnic, and class discrimination and exploitation. The **global justice movement** refers to a loosely connected network of social organizations and actors engaged in collective action to advance social, economic, political, and environmental justice among people across the globe (della Porta, 2007). Susan George (2004), author of *Another World is Possible If . . .*, stated that people opposed to the policies and practices of the WTO, the IMF, and WB

refer to themselves collectively as the “social movement,” the “citizens’ movement,” or the “global justice movement.” In a pinch, if headline space is really at a premium, they’ll settle for “alter-” or “counter-,” as preferable to the inaccurate, even insulting, “anti-” globalization. The movement is not “anti,” but internationalist and deeply engaged with the world as a whole and the fate of everyone who shares the planet. (p. ix)

In a speech delivered at Occupy Wall Street in October 2011, award-winning journalist, author, and social critic Naomi Klein (2011) noted that while pundits on TV in the United States were baffled by the protests, citizen activists in Italy, Greece, Spain, Ireland, and elsewhere welcomed U.S. participation in the global citizens’ movement for social justice. Calling attention to the new normal of economic and ecological disasters, she states:

We all know, or at least sense, that the world is upside down: We act as if there is no end to what is actually finite—fossil fuels and the atmospheric space to absorb their emissions. And we act as if there are strict and immovable limits to what is actually bountiful—the financial resources to build the kind of society we need.

The task of our time is to turn this around: to challenge this false scarcity. To insist that we can afford to build a decent, inclusive society—while at the same time, respect the real limits to what the earth can take. (Klein, 2011, p. 47)

Today, social movements such as the climate justice movement, #BlackLivesMatter, and the #MeToo movement are increasingly global in scope, address the connections

across and among issues impacting people's everyday lives, and imagine another world based on social, political, and economic justice. For example, climate justice activists recognize that communities of color are disproportionately impacted by climate change, that climate justice is linked to access to food, water, health care, and education, as well as to living-wage jobs, affordable housing, and gender equity, and that climate justice connects the dots between toxic environments, police brutality, and mass incarceration (Calma & Rosa-Aquino, 2019; Thomas & Haynes, 2020). The Green New Deal is a congressional resolution with a bold and transformative vision to address the crises of inequality and climate change facing the United States. New York Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Massachusetts Senator Edward Markey introduced the resolution calling on the U.S. federal government to take the lead to reduce the nation's dependence on fossil fuels, curb greenhouse gas emissions, and guarantee living wage jobs in clean energy industries (Friedman, 2019). A youth activist group, the Sunrise Movement, popularized the name, Green New Deal, and galvanized national attention; across the country, local coalitions of environmental, labor, consumer, and immigrant rights groups are advancing Green New Deal policies that reduce pollution, address economic inequities, and social injustices (Beachy, 2018). Can the Green New Deal, as Naomi Klein (2019) imagines, be a framework to unite and expand justice movements across the country and the world so that another world is possible?

**Political globalization** is complex and often contradictory. At this point, it is important to note that the backlash against globalization has led to a rise in ethnonationalism, authoritarian, and increased militarism globally. While some argue that our current times are marked by an increased sense of alienation, powerlessness, and apathy toward political engagement, the wide range of participation in intercultural resistance movements and multicultural activism, the global justice movement, and the climate justice movement suggests otherwise.

## INTERCULTURAL DIMENSIONS OF CULTURAL GLOBALIZATION

As people move around the globe—whether for tourism, work, or political asylum; in the military; in search of economic opportunity; or for survival—we carry our culture with us and make efforts, however elaborate or small, to re-create a sense of the familiar or a sense of “home.” While the complex notion of culture cannot be reduced to objects that are tucked away in a suitcase or packed in a backpack, the things we take as we move, travel, or flee are significant in representing our culture, just as the languages we speak, the beliefs that we hold, and the practices we enact. In the following section, I introduce a few of the more salient aspects of **cultural globalization**, including migration and the formation of cultural connectivities, cultural flows within the context of unequal power relations, and hybrid cultural forms and identities.

### Migration and Cultural Connectivities

Due to the forces of globalization, people from different cultural backgrounds—ethnic/racial cultures, religious cultures, class cultures, national cultures, and regional



cultures—find their lives, their livelihoods, and their lifestyles increasingly intertwined and overlapping. People from different backgrounds have been engaging with each other and experiencing intercultural contact for many mill-ennia; however, the degree and intensity of interaction, the patterns and directions of movement, and the terms of engagement in the context of globalization are different than in earlier eras of human interaction. All this, as anthropologists Jonathan Xavier Inda and Renato Rosaldo (2001) claimed, points to “a world in motion. It is a world where cultural subjects and objects—that is, meaningful forms, such as capital, people, commodities, images, and ideas—have become unhinged from particular localities” (p. 11). They argued that culture, in the context of globalization, is **deterritorialized**, which means that cultural subjects (people) and cultural objects (film, food, traditions, and ideas) are uprooted from their “situatedness” in a particular physical, geographic location and **reterritorialized**, or relocated in new, multiple, and varied geographic spaces. Meanings of cultural forms, such as Hindi movies starring Shah Rukh Khan, or TV programs from the United States, such as *This Is Us* or *The Big Bang Theory*, that are broadcast around the world take on different meanings in different locations. Similarly, a person’s or group’s sense of identity, who migrates from Iran to Israel to the United States, for example, is reinscribed in new and different cultural contexts, altering, fusing, and sometimes transforming that identity.

In previous times, when people moved voluntarily or forcibly to distant locations, they likely stayed there. While they may have had intermittent contact with home, they were unlikely to visit frequently or maintain regular communication as is possible today through the Internet, nor were they likely to consider several places in the world as “home.” Today, due to advances in communication and transportation technology, we see the emergence of global circuits of cultural connection and community interconnection between multiple geographic locations crossing national and continental boundaries. Someone who migrates from Latin America, India, or China to the United States may return regularly to work or visit. We also see the formation of economic and social networks or associations that operate internationally where communities of people from one location—for example, Mexico or South Korea—may unite to support each other in the new location and maintain ties and connections, sending financial support or **remittances** as a community to the city or regional community at home.

The reality of groups of people migrating to new locations and maintaining connections to “home” is not a new phenomenon. Take, for example, the notion of **diasporic communities**, groups of people who leave their homeland and who maintain a longing for—even if only in their imagination—a return “home,” such as the expulsion and dispersion of the Jews during the



Kathryn Sorrells

**PHOTO 2.2**  
What are the effects of the uneven distribution of cultural products globally?

Babylonian Exile in 700 BCE, the African diaspora that forcibly uprooted and transplanted Africans to the Americas and the Caribbean during the period of British colonization, or the Armenian diaspora in the early part of the 20th century that resulted from the genocide of approximately 1.5 million Armenians. What is different today in the context of globalization is that communities are able to maintain transnational connections that are not only in the imagination but where “home” can literally be in multiple places, where one’s neighborhood may cross national boundaries, and where one’s community is spread around the globe.

### Cultural Flows and Unequal Power Relations

With Starbucks’s 31,000 coffeehouses in 80 countries around the globe, Apple’s global footprint, Coca-Cola ubiquitous in even the most remote areas, and Mickey Mouse one of the most internationally recognized figures, what are the implications for local and/or national cultures? Responses to global flows of culture and cultural products range from outraged efforts to protect local cultures to a full embrace of the “McDonaldization” of the world, yet what are the effects of the global flow of cultural products on local and national cultures? Is the flow of cultural products, such as music, films, food, and media evenly distributed with equitable, multidirectional movement? Most observers, even proponents of economic globalization, recognize an asymmetrical power relationship that magnifies inequities in the flow of culture and cultural forms. What are the implications of dramatically uneven distribution of culture and imbalanced diffusion of cultural products that are ideologically infused?

Some argue that globalization has brought about a homogenization, and specifically an **Americanization** of the world’s cultures that need to be examined carefully not only from an economic point of view but also from the perspective of U.S. dominance and cultural imperialism. **Cultural imperialism** is the domination of one culture over others through cultural forms, such as popular culture, media, and cultural products. Economic globalization has exacerbated an inequitable spread of U.S.-based corporations and cultural products that, while providing additional goods and services, also has led to the bankruptcy of local industries and has had a dramatic impact on local cultural values, traditions, norms, and practices. In many parts of the world, resistance to the influx of “foreign” ideas, products, and practices is rooted in a sense of threat to traditional, local cultural values, norms, and practices. For example, since economic liberalization in India in the 1990s, celebrating Valentine’s Day has become increasingly popular, but some in India, particularly Hindu fundamentalist groups reject what is viewed as Western influence. Valentine was a relatively obscure Catholic saint until the mid-1800s when U.S. greeting card entrepreneurs began marketing cards. The practice of gift-giving between lovers was mainly limited to the United States and Britain in the 20th century. Yet today, the middle class across Asia celebrates the holiday. While perhaps seemingly harmless, the highly commodified holiday is experienced by some as an incursion on and displacement of local traditions of courtship, love, and family relationships. On February 14th, Hindu fundamentalist groups organize demonstrations against Valentine’s Day burning Valentine’s Day cards and harassing couples (Flock, 2018).

Fearing the loss of an ideological stronghold on youth, Chinese President Xi Jinping ordered Chinese universities to “adhere to the correct political orientation” to counter what is viewed as cultural threats from popular culture and an infiltration of Western values. Despite censorship and crackdowns, Chinese youth increasingly have access to U.S. television programs, movies, and sports that promote independence, autonomy, and individual identities as well as mistrust and challenge to authority. The underlying beliefs and behavioral norms of individualism and democracy are seen as threats to the cultural values of collectivism and the political goals of communism (Fish, 2017). In France, where the French language and cultural practices, such as finely prepared food and films are integrally linked to national cultural identity, there is active resistance to how U.S. popular culture, the English language, and fast-food chains have invaded the physical and representational landscape of the country. Responding to a sense of loss of culture, political leaders pass laws intended to protect the distinctiveness of French culture (Crothers, 2018). Former prime minister of Canada Kim Campbell noted the following:

For Americans, cultural industries are industries like any other. For Canadians, cultural industries are industries that, aside from their economic impact, create products that are fundamental to the survival of Canada as a society. The globalization of the world economy and communications has been a vehicle for the Americanization of the globe. For Canada and other countries, globalization has been a phenomenon within which their distinct, non-American cultures must struggle to survive. (Globalization 101.org, n.d.)

The “struggle to survive” for non-American cultures and for many nondominant cultures within the United States, is an ongoing, daily contestation between [among] local/national cultural industries, products, and identities and the overwhelming dominance of U.S. cultural products, cultural industries, and culturally produced identities in the world market today. The unequal diffusion of Western, specifically U.S. cultural products, identities, and ideologies and control of mass media can be seen as a form of cultural imperialism, where cultures outside the center of power (those outside the United States or those within who do not identify with the dominant mainstream culture) are saturated through market-driven globalization by American cultural ideals, and become, over time, increasingly “Americanized” and homogenized by and assimilated to American culture.

John Tomlinson (1999) argued that cultural imperialism in the context of globalization is a continuation of earlier forms of imperialism as evidenced in the colonization process of the 16th to 19th centuries and represents “an historical pattern of increasing global cultural hegemony” (p. 144). Cultural imperialism today can be understood as the domination of Western cultural forms—from music to architecture to food to clothing styles—Western norms and practices—from gender norms to dating practices to eating habits—and Western beliefs—from individualism to Western-style democracy to Western notions of “freedom” and human rights—around the globe.

As you can imagine, U.S. cultural imperialism, the Americanization of the world, and the notion that the cultures of the world are becoming homogenized—meaning that cultures, over time, will become the same—are hotly debated topics within the cultural dimensions of globalization. So what do you think? How does this picture of the world mesh with your experience and understanding? Even those who fervently oppose the notion of homogenization recognize the tremendous impact U.S. popular culture and U.S. cultural industries have on cultures around the globe. However, they also suggest that the cultural imperialism approach is too one-sided, limiting, and simplistic. If the world's cultures are not becoming homogenized and yet are deeply influenced by the distribution and dissemination of U.S./Western cultural products and ideologies, then what is going on?

### Hybrid Cultural Forms and Identities

Without erasing the asymmetrical power relations and the dominance of U.S. and Western cultural forms, it is important to note the power, voice, and agency of those who are affected by or are recipients of these dominant U.S. cultural products. Can we assume, for example, that similar meanings are derived from television shows, such as *The Big Bang Theory*, *House of Cards*, and *Breaking Bad*, when they are viewed by people in India, Costa Rica, and China, or even in different cultural communities within the United States?

Inda and Rosaldo (2008) identified another important question to ask. Is the flow of culture and cultural products only from the West to the rest of the world, or is there movement in multiple directions? The international success of Indian superstar Shah Rukh Khan indicates that there are directions of flow and circuits of cultural influence influencing cultures around the world other than those originating from the United States. The winner of the online reader's poll for *Time* magazine's 2018 Person of the Year was the South Korean K-pop boy band, BTS, beating out other famous artists and global leaders. The group's songs are mostly sung in Korean, disrupting assumptions that the globalization of culture is synonymous with Americanization (Vanham, 2018). When we look closely at our lived experience in the context of globalization, we see that the overlap and intersection of cultures create **hybrid cultural forms**, or a mix that produces new and distinct forms, challenging the idea that there is only a unilateral dissemination of culture and cultural forms from the United States and Western cultures to the rest of the world.

Take, for example, reggaeton, a blend of rap and reggae with Latin influence and origins, which soared into popularity in the mid-2000s. After being nominated for a Latin Grammy in 2005, Daddy Yankee, the Puerto Rican reggaeton artist, said in an interview, "In the past year we didn't have a true genre that speaks for the Latinos. Right now we have that with the reggaeton" (Daddy Yankee Interview, n.d.). In his 2014 song "Palabras Con Sentido" (Spanish for "Words With Sense"), Daddy Yankee responded to criticism of reggaeton as social poison, arguing that urban music saves lives and provides work. I am sure that you can think of other music forms that could be considered hybrid or fusion forms, such as jazz, rock, Rai—originating from Western Algeria with Arabic, French, and

Spanish influence—or Kwaito, a fusion of U.S. house music and African rhythms popular in townships in South Africa.

Communication scholar Radha Hegde (2002) defined the creation of hybrid cultures and hybrid cultural forms as a type of resistance that nondominant groups employ out of fear of total assimilation and as a means of cultural maintenance in the midst of powerful dominant cultural forces. “Hybrid cultures, therefore, are not always a romantic return to the homeland; they are also cultures that develop and survive as forms of collective resistance” (p. 261). Throughout this book, we explore in greater detail how individuals, cultural groups, communities, and nations adapt to, resist, and negotiate their collective cultural identities, sense of cultural agency, and cultural productions within the context of U.S./Western cultural imperialism and the global forces of cultural homogenization.

## SUMMARY

Do you have a clearer understanding of globalization at this point? As you can tell, it is an extremely complex phenomenon with multiple historical, cultural, political, and economic influences. In this chapter, globalization is defined as the complex web of forces and factors that have brought people, cultures, cultural products, and markets, as well as beliefs and practices into increasingly greater proximity to and interrelationship with one another. Globalization is characterized by an increasingly dynamic and mobile world that has led to an intensification of interaction and exchange between people, cultures, and cultural forms across geographic, cultural, and national boundaries. It has also resulted in a rapidly growing global interdependence, which translates into shared interests, needs, and resources, as well as greater tensions, contestations, and conflicts over resources. A magnification of inequities based on flows of capital, labor, and access to education and technology, as well as the increasing power of multinational corporations and global financial institutions, is a very real part of globalization. These forces and factors did not just develop independent of world history. Rather, globalization must be understood in relation to

the **historical legacy of colonization**, Western domination, and U.S. hegemony that shapes intercultural relations today.

While it is somewhat artificial to divide globalization into economic, political, and cultural aspects, we can more easily highlight and understand the intercultural dimensions of globalization by this approach. As workplaces, communities, schools, and people’s lives become more intricately interwoven in global webs, intercultural communication is increasingly present in all areas of our lives. To analyze, understand, and effectively act in intercultural situations, we need to be able to take broad macro-level perspectives as well as micro-level views. The purpose of this chapter was to introduce you to global dynamics that shape intercultural communication—including neoliberalism, the role of institutions of global governance like the WTO, IMF, and WB as well as the global resistant and global justice movements; the roles of ethnonationalism, militarization, and ideological wars; and cultural imperialism and cultural hybridity—that influence who we interact with, frame our attitudes about and experiences of each other, and structure our

intercultural interaction in relationships of power. Since intercultural communication is an embodied experience and most often an embodied experience of “difference,” our next chapter focuses

on understanding how and what our bodies communicate, how our bodies have been marked by difference historically, and how performances of the body communicate in the context of globalization.

## KEY TERMS

- North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) 30  
 World Bank (WB) 33  
 International Monetary Fund (IMF) 33  
 World Trade Organization (WTO) 33  
 First World 35  
 Second World 35  
 Third World 35  
 developing country/developed country 36  
 Global South/Global North 36  
 globalization 39  
 maquiladoras 40  
 economic globalization 40  
 economic liberalization 41  
 free-trade agreements 42  
 neoliberalism 42  
 United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) 42  
 xenophobia 46  
 democratization 46  
 dog-whistle 46  
 ethnonationalism 47  
 militarization 48  
 ideology 48  
 ideological wars 49  
 liberal democracy 49  
 global justice movement 51  
 political globalization 52  
 cultural globalization 52  
 deterritorialized 53  
 reterritorialized 53  
 remittances 53  
 diasporic communities 53  
 Americanization 54  
 cultural imperialism 54  
 hybrid cultural forms 56  
 historical legacy of colonization 57

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

### Discussion Questions

1. Consider the scenarios at the beginning of the chapter. What themes are interwoven through all the scenarios? Without erasing the obvious and more subtle differences between the situations, what common factors and forces shape the world that these scenarios describe? What intercultural communication issues are evident in the scenarios?
2. What is the relationship between colonialism and globalization? What are the similarities, and what are the differences? Using concrete examples, discuss how the legacy of colonialism impacts the process of globalization today.
3. How are economic, political, and cultural globalization interconnected? Using concrete examples from the chapter and/or your own observation/knowledge, discuss the relationships between economic, political, and cultural globalization.

4. Is globalization a process of Americanization and cultural homogenization? Or does globalization produce hybrid cultural forms and thus create

cultural heterogeneity? What is your position in this debate? What does this debate tell us about the complex nature of globalization?

### Activities

#### 1. Historicizing Globalization—Group Activity

- a. The class is divided into three groups. The first group is assigned to research the history of economic globalization, the second group on political globalization, and the last group on cultural globalization.
- b. Each group should focus on three to five major historical events, time periods, key individuals, institutions, and so on that shaped the course of globalization from economic, political, and cultural dimensions.
- c. Each group draws a historical timeline.
- d. Compare the three timelines and examine how the three facets of globalization are interconnected with each other.

#### 2. Spatializing Globalization—Group Activity

- a. In small groups, research the current global movement of people, circulation of information and products, political and economic partnership, international and regional conflicts, and so forth.
- b. Draw a map so that people can understand the dynamics of globalization visually.

- c. Once the global map is drawn to describe the macro picture of globalization, discuss the following questions:

- i. What are the patterns of movements you can see on the map?
- ii. What are the relationships of power you can read in the transnational movements of people and commodities shown on the map?
- iii. If you were to position yourself in the map of globalization, where would you find yourself geographically, economically, politically, and culturally?
- iv. How are the patterns of global movements reflected in the dynamics of intercultural communication at the interpersonal and local levels?

#### 3. Research the IMF, WB, and WTO—Group Activity

- a. In small groups, research the three international organizations that are the powerful players of globalization.
- b. Report your findings to the class and discuss how the roles and functions of international organizations shape the process of globalization today.

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