In the aftermath of the September 11th terrorist attacks in the United States, the concept of value differentiation and its impact on national, regional and even global cooperation has become more salient than ever before. This has been even more relevant since 1945 when countries began to experience a new form of economic and political internationalization. Values as a derivative of culture were usually discussed as a subdivision of political system or independently acting social process. Because economics dominated the shaping of national policies, rarely culture and its derivatives were regarded as influential independent variables. However, as economic policies and attempts for producing political stability and even democratization processes failed or began to dysfunction, the concept of culture as an underlying independent determinant emerged as an influential premise of explanation. In the 1990s, there has been extensive discussion regarding the comprehensiveness versus singular meaning of globalization. Is globalization a comprehensive and a universal system of statecraft or is it only related to regulated and standardized economic interactions among countries and NGOs? It appears to this author that globalization
outside of the Western European and North American spheres has only the latter meaning and relevance. It is only in these regions that there is a congruity between the cultural, political and economic entities as they have evolved and cultivated one another simultaneously. Not only it may not be possible but it is not feasible to expect that capitalist ways and means should lead to cultural liberalism as well.

In Asia, religions are influential inputs into the processes of cultural behavior. The hypothesis that the author would like to advance in this paper is that economic globalization has no fundamental cultural or value related obstacle among the countries of the Middle East. However, because security or political cooperation deals with issues of national sovereignty and sovereignty is a particularly sensitive cultural issue in Islamic teachings, it might run into areas of “value conflict.” In substantiating this hypothesis, it should be pointed out that even among the most fundamentalist groups in the Middle East, economic cooperation between the Middle East countries and the rest of the world is not contested. At the heart of the conflict is political and particularly cultural sovereignty of Muslims and Islamic countries. Among the most credible theories explaining the causes of the Iranian revolution of 1979 is the theory that the Shah’s regime, through policies it adopted, pursued an objective of undermining Iranian cultural underpinnings and that it put Iranian national sovereignty on sale. No one and no group have objected to its economic, privatization or industrialization policies. Below, I will delineate the conceptual parameters between various forms of globalization and argue that values do matter in security and political cooperation in the Middle East. Moreover, the author is of the belief that the level of congruity between “Middle Eastern values” and democratization is nil as of now. Levels of adaptation and varied modalities between the two worldviews might be advanced if Islamic principles are reapplied to the global milieu in a different way
compared to its traditionally bounded context. As the theme of this conference might want to promote, there must be adaptability between values of a society and its acceptance of democracy. As the current discourses and the nature of political conflicts indicate in the Middle East, such adaptability is far fetched. However, alterations and evolutions cannot be ruled out.

Clearly, one can differentiate between economic, political and cultural globalization. However, it appears that there is a fine and unpolished conceptual and empirical overlap between the three aforementioned layers of globalization. Economic globalization with its origins in the European reformation is now a universal achievement for the whole mankind. It is true that the current axioms of economic globalization has been achieved on the basis of a certain historical cultural and political setting but the Japanese and the East Asian examples of economic growth and industrialization vividly demonstrate that producing wealth even in its modern capitalist example only requires a political determination and a harmonious social structure. Where people can organize themselves around economic targets, they can be productive irrespective of their cultural particularities and historical processes.

What liberalism, individualism and secularism have achieved in the sense of modern capitalist formations, Shintoism of Japan and Buddhism of China have similarly been able to produce wealth of capitalist nature. In other words, the philosophical rationality of Western liberalism and the philosophical rationality of Shintoism and Buddhism have resulted in the same outcome, namely, industrialization of the economy and the underlying capitalist axioms of finance, banking, consumerism and investment strategies. I call the former, the *philosophical rationality* like liberalism and the latter, *instrumental rationality* like capitalist logic in economic growth. Societies will endure and prosper if and only if they can create conceptual
and strategic congruity between the bases of philosophical rationality and outcomes of instrumental rationality. I believe that the main source of underdevelopment, political frustrations and lack of meaningful incorporation of the Muslim world into the international community are rooted in its inability or delay in reconciling and harmonizing its philosophical rationality, namely Islam, with the underlying international norms of instrumental rationality. It appears that the economic expectations of citizens around the world have become similar and homogenous. It does not matter whether one is a Spanish citizen, a Chinese citizen, a Russian citizen or a Brazilian citizen. Economic expectations are now clearly defined, universally accepted and the pressures to realize them depend on the efficiency, organization and a strategic outlook of the state and its social and economic agents of construction.

Now, I would like to turn to the notion of political globalization. If all societies and states are more or less driven into the acceptance of economic globalization, is there then a choice when it comes to the notion of political globalization? The evolving matrix that results from the interactions of philosophical and instrumental rationality now becomes further complex. States and citizens are confronted with an important question: Does the continuation of wealth production and an organized economy require pluralism, a party-system polity and the freedom of political expression? If the state is efficient like South Korea, Malaysia and Singapore, does it also have to delegate authority, be accountable for its non-economic decisions and be subject to media scrutiny? I believe that the response in the medium to long term is positive. Continued and successful expansion of the economy and the formation of the middle classes reshape the political life of societies. Economic prosperity leads to the necessity and the instrumentality of political
diversity and the emergence of civil society. There is an unpolished and meticulous point of conceptual departure here: whereas economic globalization is a *decision and a political decision*, political globalization is a *process and a long and culturally-bound process*. The time span of potential success in economic globalization is much shorter than the achievement of political globalization. Moreover, the material production and reproduction of wealth is of more urgency and approximation to human instincts and survival whereas political pluralism requires preparation, awareness, education, group cohesiveness and more important of all, the relative satisfaction of economic needs.

What about cultural globalization? What does cultural globalization mean? Those who advocate universal cultural globalization make the following contemplation: that all human beings regardless of their roots and historical experience, religion, ethnic background once reach relative economic advancement, have no choice but to accept the conceptual, behavioral and cognitive underpinnings of capitalist societies. I would like to refute that argument and state that cultural globalization is neither possible nor desirable as a policy pursuit. My first area of reasoning is that culture is uniquely geography bound, it is history bound and it is particularly bound by a matchless and unparalleled social construct. Individuals can only explore themselves within their own social construct. They can learn from other social constructs but they can only find meaning in their particular historical experience. Economic products can compete but cultural and historical experiences can only lead to greater maturity of one another. No individual can ever escape or attempt to permanently disguise his or her roots, and no strategic and sophisticated planning can redirect the point of reference of a people in a fundamental way. Consumer behavior can be altered and people can be convinced of the benefits of a
civil society structure but individuals cannot be denied their cultural references and roots.

Second, people tend to find happiness, and more importantly, freedom in the touches, art, passion, romance and the complex behavioral interactions of their own cultural framework. No Iranian can ever truly become an American and no British can ever be reproduced in the cultural settings of an Indian. As the British philosopher Isaiah Berlin asserts, people will find their freedom in their own culture and identity.

Third, entertainment centers of the world should not mistake people’s instant pleasure and appreciation of movies and other entertainment products for cultural acceptance of their production. Once most people leave movie theatres and move away from their television sets, they return to their cultural roots. Any cultural production that is closer to human instincts has the potential to gain international stature. An example could be Yani music. Otherwise, the immediate joy of a production should not be taken as a permanent influence. Forth, no individual and no nation, if given a choice, desires to be dominated. Whereas nations are willing to negotiate commercial and economic contracts, no nation will willingly negotiate its identity and cultural roots. Therefore, it is inhuman, illiberal and irrational to try to pursue a strategy of creating a uniform human being with a uniform active and reactive system of behavior and belief structure. Moreover, what is the ultimate aim of globalization? They seem to be wealth, prosperity and peace. If peace is a genuine pursuit at the global level, then its essence needs to be based on the essentialist human instinct to be peaceful. To be peaceful is to be culturally attached to the local culture. Therefore, it is unnecessary to set a goal such as cultural globalization since interference in the local cultures would disturb the peace structure of societies. Conclusively, the maturation of cultures requires exchanges not coercions.
Five and last, the idea of cultural globalization is not an Asian concept not a Middle Eastern or African or Latin American concept. It is originated from the political, economic and entertainment centers of the West. But true liberalism opens the landscape of cultural freedom and allows cultural differentiation. Liberalism is essential in the economic field because it leads to competition and productivity. Liberalism is ultimately an important requirement in the process of political globalization because it allows a space between state and societal interests. But the beauty and essence of liberalism in the cultural arena is its almost sacred foundation: individualism and its almost divine law in differentiation.

In the Middle East, cultural values sometimes are elevated to a level of sacredness. It is the most important source of identity for the people of the region. The significant difference between Islam and East Asian religions is that Islam is a highly politicized religion. Attachments to cultural values in Islam immediately become meaningful in a political context. In Islam, therefore, politics and culture are intertwined. The Arab-Israeli conflict on the one hand and the weak state of economic and social conditions in the Middle East have cultivated and contributed to political Islam to be surfaced. In other words, the ultimate resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict and an improvement in the economic conditions throughout the Middle East would naturally lead to moderate politics. But there is a complex intervening variable here: the peculiarity of political sovereignty in the Middle East. Tensions and conflicts will continue as long as there is a substantial security and political intervention in the Middle East. Whereas in the East Asian states, there is the art of differentiating between security cooperation and the upholding of cultural values, in the Middle East, cultural values do extend into political arena and interpret security and political interactions in a cultural worldview. Furthermore, if we agree that
democracy as a Western concept has evolved in a particular culture, then it is rather easy to witness the substantial areas of conflict in Middle Eastern and Western cultures and lead us into a conclusion that democracy in the Middle East faces both philosophical and instrumental barriers. These barriers can be substantiated in three areas: the concept of the individual, the concept of the state and the concept of social interactions. The author believes that there are salient philosophical gaps between definitions of individual, state and social interactions in the Middle East and those in the West. As the domains of globalization widen in the decades ahead, theoreticians and politicians dealing with the Middle East (within and without) will be confronted with challenges to bridge these conceptual gaps. After all, without preparing the cultural context both in terms of elite political consensus as well as social education, democracy may neither be a suitable objective nor a practical strategy of political change for societies beyond the Western world. However, as the examples of Malaysia, United Arab Emirates and Turkey demonstrate, where religion can be conceived of as a source of morality, it is certainly possible to proceed into areas of economic development with global recognition. Ultimately, consensus among fundamental elite groups in the Middle Eastern countries either for economic development or for the institutionalization of democratic institutions can prove highly instrumental in their actualization. Greater degrees of adaptation into the processes of globalization can facilitate peaceful changes in this region.
References


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