

A CONCEPTUAL PERSPECTIVE TO MEDIA: CULTURAL GLOBALIZATION, CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses three different conceptual perspectives: cultural globalization, Samuel Huntington's Clash of Civilizations, and Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony to understand and analyze the increasing popularity of Turkish TV series in the Middle East, Balkans, and Eastern Europe. I scrutinize the potentials and pitfalls of these three approaches in order to examine the broad dissemination and successes of Turkish serials in those regions within the larger context of globalization. Consequently, this paper offers a conceptual framework that provides illumination for various significant analytical issues. Due to the circulation of media content among non-Western countries and constant flux of local and regional cultures, cultural goods such as television series do not function as the ideological apparatuses of the West on "the Rest." The globalization is not merely a top-down Western project, but rather a process that is local in its effects, that requires consumer consent, and that prevalent influences come from places like Turkey as well as from Europe and the US.

Keywords: Turkish television series, Cultural globalization, Clash of civilizations, Hegemony, Samuel Huntington, Antonio Gramsci

Medya'ya Kavramsal bir Bakış: Kültürel Küreselleşme, Medeniyetler Çatışması veya Hegemonya

ÖZET

Bu makale Türk televizyon dizilerinin Ortadoğu, Balkanlar ve Doğu Avrupa'da yükselen popüleritesini anlamak ve analiz etmek için üç farklı kavramsal bakış açısını tartışmaktadır: kültürel küreselleşme, Samuel Huntington'ın medeniyetler çatışması ve Antonio Gramsci'nin hegemonya kavramı. Küreselleşme bağlamında Türk dizilerinin bu bölgelerdeki yayılımı/dağılımı ve başarısı bu üç yaklaşımın güçlü ve zayıf noktaları göz önüne alınarak dikkatlice incelenmiştir. Sonuç olarak, bu makale önemli bir konuyu aydınlatarak kavramsal bir çerçeve sunar. Medya içeriklerinin batılı olmayan ülkeler arasındaki dolaşımı, yerel ve bölgesel kültürlerin sürekli değişimi gibi nedenlerle televizyon dizileri kültürel ürünler olarak

sadece Batı'nın diğerleri üzerindeki ideolojik araçları olarak işlev görmezler. Küreselleşme yalnızca yukarıdan aşağıya dayatılan Batı'nın bir modeli değildir, içinde yerel etkileri de barındıran, tüketicinin rızasını gerektiren ve Avrupa ve ABD'den olduğu kadar Türkiye gibi ülkelerden de kaynaklanan hakim etkileri de içeren bir süreçtir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Türk televizyon dizileri, kültürel küreselleşme, medeniyetler çatışması, hegemonya, Samuel Huntington, Antonio Gramsci

Culture has always been a weapon of the powerful Immanuel Wallerstein¹

Introduction

The striking popularity and recent successes of Turkish TV series in neighboring countries and bordering regions have been increasingly recognized in relation to the rise of the current government and the conservative Islamic Justice and Development Party (AKP) in Turkey. Since coming into power in 2002, the AKP has established close relationships with countries in the Middle East, Central Asia, the Balkans and, to some extent, Eastern Europe. The AKP's attempts to improve political, economic and cultural relationships with neighboring countries in these regions and also with Turkic nations in Central Asia help Turkish media companies to initiate business transactions in these regions, providing an opportunity for integration with regional or trans-regional media conglomerates. Both consumer interest and the growing trend among scholars and journalists to turn their attention to these now globally recognized Turkish TV programs point to the unforeseen success of national TV series in international media spheres². In this paper, by relying on different approaches, I strive to understand which conceptual perspectives provide the most helpful tools for analyzing the extensive popularity of Turkish TV series. In this context, I explore (1) the cultural globalization approach, (2) Samuel Huntington's conservative political views as crystallized in his seminal article, "The Clash of Civilizations?," and (3) the Marxist perspective derived from Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony. I discuss all three theoretical perspectives in relation to globalization, since the concept is crucial to understanding and analyzing media flows and the

¹ (Wallerstein 2000: 99).

² Media sphere can be defined as "a new public sphere," "a compound of the media and public sphere," and "a critical 'culturescape' in which meanings flow through various channels of human and technologically enhanced modes of communication" (Lewis, 2008: 5)

international circulation of popular Turkish TV series, in light of “the complexity of the global contemporary media/culture spectrum at the start of the twenty-first century” (Sreberny-Mohammadi 2000: 353). In the first section, reviewing scholarly literature, I explain essential concepts and the three different approaches highlighted in this paper. First, I briefly explore the multiplicity and ambiguity of the concept of globalization, maintaining a focus on cultural globalization in order to contextualize media in this highly contentious field. Second, I discuss Samuel Huntington’s controversial article “The Clash of Civilizations?” and consider his critique. Third, I analyze the term “hegemony” from a Gramscian perspective. Then, in the second section of the paper, I scrutinize the advantages and pitfalls of these three approaches in analyzing the broad dissemination and success of Turkish serials in neighboring regions, including the Middle East, the Balkans, and Eastern Europe within the larger context of globalization.

Globalization and the Reworking of Cultural Globalization

Globalization has been one of the most popular topics of research in the 20th and 21st centuries with an abundant literature. However, it is also one of the most complicated concepts of modern times. Although the root term “global” has been in circulation since 1641, the first known use of the word “globalization” dates back to 1951 (*Merriam-Webster.com*). Cultural globalization is a vague concept whose meaning changes depending on the context in which it is used. An attempt to clearly define these two concepts is not only challenging but also futile, because they are related to many other complicated and fuzzy concepts, such as postmodernism, “the world-system” (Wallerstein, 2000), modernization, and (neo)-colonialism. Furthermore, although global flows are not new to humankind, the definitions used to describe them have changed drastically over time. Even though “interactions across distance” (Sreberny-Mohammadi, 2000) have occurred among different people, cultures, and societies since the inception of social relations, something new is conceptualized with the term “globalization,” as the notion is employed today to infer the unitarity of the world in which we live. As anthropologist Sally E. Merry points out, “pace” in everyday life helps to define this new global culture. She observes, “there are many similarities in the global flow of persons, ideas, and projects of nineteenth century colonialism. It is the pace, rather than the kind, of cultural flows that has changed in recent years” (Merry, 2001, p. 42). Media scholar Marc Raboy (2002) indicates other fundamental characteristics of contemporary globalization when he writes of “the

diminishing sovereignty of nation-states,” “the increasing integration of the world economy,” “the technologically-based shrinking of time and space,” “the passing of received ideas about identity,” “the emergence of new, locally based global networks,” and “the establishment of a new framework for global governance” (p. 113–118). In mainstream debates, globalization signifies, on the one hand, an “Americanization/Westernization” of the non-Western societies (Mattelart, 1982; Dorfman and Mattelart, 1971; Schiller, 1976, 1991). On the other hand, it stands for heterogenization and change for the development of the world (Featherstone, 1992; Pieterse, 2009; Kraidy, 2005). Yet, in either case, as Peter Berger (2002) points out, globalization as both “the promise [of an international civil society] [and] the threat [of an American economic and political hegemony] has been greatly exaggerated” (p. 2). Consistently, however, this concept refers to changes in the economic, social, political, and cultural ordering of the world.

Similarly, according to Rico Lie (1997), “cultural globalization seems to be a buzz word [and] is an all-embracing concept . . . therefore, a very complex phenomenon. We all sense that it is happening, but also feel that it is artificial and emotional” (p. 144). Therefore, it is very difficult to grasp the meaning of the term, let alone to define it precisely. As Mike Featherstone (1992) rightly states, instead of discussing “global culture,” we can refer more precisely to “the globalization of culture” (p. 1). However, the globalization of culture cannot be considered apart from “economic globalization.” Martin Albrow (1993) argues that

culture and market combined in the 1970s in the activities of multinational corporations seeking to maximize the worldwide sales of products through global advertising. Perhaps most famously Coca Cola offered the image of an assembly of people of all nations and colors singing of “perfect harmony.” “Globalization” became known as a marketing strategy soon after, although it remains contested just how far a global strategy allows for cultural difference. (p. 248)

In his germinal essay “Globalization and the Postmodern Turn,” Douglas Kellner (2001) claims,

Global culture involves promoting life-style, consumption, products, and identities. Transnational corporations deploy advertising to penetrate local markets, to sell global products, and to overcome local resistance. Expanding private cable and satellite systems have been aggressively promoting a commercial culture throughout the world. In a sense, culture itself is being redefined, for previously local and national cultures have been forces of resistance to global forces, protecting the traditions, identities and modes of life of specific groups and peoples. (p. 28)

Hence, perhaps the most important far-reaching effect of cultural globalization is the *commercialization of culture*. Production and consumption of cultural creations and goods are considered in the context of economic relations and economic globalization, yielding a milieu in which cultural products are commodities. As a result, culture itself has become a product, sold in the marketplace. Within this context, cultural globalization is the extension of the mass culture of the most developed countries, since globalization of culture is not an equal, well-balanced mutual relationship between Western and non-Western countries. However, the question arises, and in the second section I address, whether we can explain the remarkable success of Turkish melodramas in other regions through the conceptual framework of cultural globalization.

Huntington and Globalization

In his famous article “The Clash of Civilizations,” published in *Foreign Affairs* in summer 1993, famous conservative political scientist, Samuel Huntington takes a different approach to globalization and underlines the importance of culture. Huntington (1993) argues that

the fundamental source of conflict in this new [post-Cold-War] world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural. Nation states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations. The clash of civilizations will dominate global politics. The fault lines between civilizations will be the battle lines of the future. (p. 22)

According to Huntington, the future will be shaped largely by interactions among the seven or eight major civilizations. These are the Western, Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American, and possibly African civilizations. However, critics like Berger (2002) note that Huntington’s theory fails to take into account that “the ‘West’ is hardly a homogeneous cultural entity” (p. 15). Similarly, in her article “The Modernizing Imperative: Tradition and Change” in *Foreign Affairs*, ardent conservative American ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick (1993) criticizes Huntington by stating:

Huntington's classification of contemporary civilizations is questionable. . . . If civilization is defined by common objective elements such as language, history, religion, customs and institutions and, subjectively, by identification, and if it is the broadest collectivity with which persons intensely identify, why distinguish “Latin American” from “Western” civilization? Like North America, Latin America is a continent settled by Europeans who brought with them European languages and a European version of Judeo-Christian religion, law, literature and gender roles. (p. 22)

Huntington's theory has been widely criticized for deficiencies ensuing from the demonization of certain cultures and religions. For instance, Huntington mentions the survival of nation-states, but it is questionable whether this prediction rests in wishful thinking, as Huntington clearly resists a powerful European Union or a united Middle East rising in opposition to the United States. Additionally, Simon Murden (2001) observes that

when people of one culture perceive those of another not just as alien but also threatening, serious conflict is likely. As the cold war ended, the historic cultural difference between the West and Islam re-emerged as one of the principal frontiers of cultural suspicion (p. 375).

Retrospectively, the theory of Huntington is based on this assumption of conflictive difference and suspicion. Huntington's lexical description of Islam as a "threat," "different," and "alien" reflects his conservative Judeo-Christian ideological stance, and his categorization of cultures is based on only one factor of culture: religion. Yet, as Huntington is clearly aware, culture is a broader category than religion, and religion, as an integral part of culture, is itself heterogeneous in each society. Communities and countries that do not share the same religion can be the part of the same culture. For example, Greek culture (Slavic-Orthodox civilization in Huntington's categorization) and the culture of the West of Turkey (Islamic culture) are more or less similar due to their exchange of cultural knowledge throughout a long shared history. Also, countries exhibit great regional differences in cultural practices within their borders. Similarly, a given religion does not create the same culture in other places, although it may cause some cultural resemblances. For instance, the cultures of Islamic African countries are very different from the cultures of East Asian countries in which the majority of the population is Muslim. Also, although Turkish and Arab cultures do share some similarities, they manifest significant cultural differences. Furthermore, Murden (2001) argues that "in much of the discourse on civilizational conflict, it was Islam that increasingly came into focus" (p. 379). Huntington's "clash of civilizations" establishes an essential dichotomy between the West and Islam because Huntington fears Islam as both an ideology and a culture. By particularly vilifying Islam and labeling non-Western cultures as "alien" and "threatening," Huntington claims both the dominance of the West and the superiority of Western culture over others. Last but not least, although Huntington tries to eliminate the concept of "ideology" because of its leftist and Marxist connotations, he nevertheless operates from within a specific ideological framework, serving as a mouthpiece for modern liberal capitalism in both his article and his book.

Globalization, Hegemony and Gramsci

In the period in which Gramsci lived, globalization was not yet a common topic of interest in academia or for the world's intelligentsia. However, a related concept, modernization, was a popular subject among intellectuals. Consequently, Gramsci discusses modernization and capitalism rather than globalization. In his analysis of modernity, we nonetheless can find his perspective on this complicated concept. Stephen Gill (1997) asserts that

Gramsci took a longer historical view of global structural change. He linked it to a conceptualization of modernity that was associated with new modes of rationality and concepts of the political. Moreover, he saw the emergence of modernity not just in terms of the rise of capital and the self-regulating market society, with its commodification of land, labor, and money. (p. 2)

Put differently, a Gramscian analysis of globalization can be built on Gramsci's theory of modernity. Another Gramscian term, "hegemony," is helpful in understanding and analyzing the globalization process in general, as well as, more particularly, the global dissemination of Turkish melodramas.

Hegemony, for Gramsci (2003), is both the strategized means and the resultant ongoing processes of becoming the dominant or leading group. In this sense, hegemony is a project for creating cultural and political consensus by intellectual and moral leadership. Becoming the ruling group or hegemon requires generating consent among the ruled, building and maintaining political alliances, and building a coercive capacity to generate authority (Louw 2005). Ted Lewellen (2002) points out that the process of creating hegemonic consensus is broadly misunderstood—that "for Gramsci, hegemony was a fairly complex theory of the establishment of dominance by consent, but it is often employed to refer to military, cultural, financial, or ideological dominance, or simply an undefined and amorphous subjection" (p. 237). Gramsci himself used the term in a much more specific and limited sense. Famous Marxist critic Stuart Hall agrees, while considering the relationship between globalization and hegemony from yet another perspective. He argues that "Gramsci uses the notion of hegemony precisely to counteract the notion of incorporation," adding that "hegemony is not the disappearance or destruction of difference. It is the construction of a *collective will* through *difference*. It is the articulation of differences which do not disappear" (emphasis added, Hall 2000: 58). Hegemony depends on generating a specific political, social, economic, and cultural program that favors the dominant group through the articulation of different cultures, values, and socio-political and

economic systems. Hall states that “what we call ‘the global’ is always composed of varieties of articulated particularities. . . . [T]he global is the self-presentation of the dominant particular” (Hall 2000: 67). Hall’s argument is supported by evidence that contemporary global capitalists understand that they can rule only through local capital and in cooperation with other political and economical elites. They do not attempt to sweep away existing sociopolitical structures; rather, they operate through them. Briefly stated, the logic of global capital operates in and through specificity. Within this context, Gramscian hegemony is a useful conceptual tool that helps to explain the logic of globalization.

When Gramsci was constructing his theory of hegemony, the social context was very different from today’s. As a result, the validity of Gramscian hegemony might come under question. However, I contend that it is valid, because Gramsci conceptualized hegemony on the basis of the capitalist system. The fascist period in which he lived was the realization of the highest stage of capitalism that had yet been reached. Therefore, he developed his theories by employing and expanding the concept of hegemony, which explains the capitalist system that, even in light of the expansion of the global economy and of cultural globalization, remains fundamentally the same today. Even within a global context, hegemony is a political logic that has no necessary ties to any particular form of sovereignty of political agency. It works through the cultural, financial, or ideological processes of hegemonic states and groups. The struggle to create hegemony has spread to the global arena, even as it continues to strive to maintain the power of the state within each country.

From a Marxist perspective, culture is considered to be an arena of struggle and transformation. In this context, cultural globalization is the field where struggle takes place and where hegemony and counter-hegemony exist. Gill underlines this relationship by stating that “the dominant discursive formation of our time is the neo-liberal concept of ‘globalization.’ It suggests that privatization and transnationalization of capital are either *inevitable* or *desirable* from a broad social viewpoint” (emphasis added, Gill 1997: 6). For Gill, the equation of free competition and free exchange with economic efficiency, societal welfare, and democracy, and a mythic, virtually unlimited social progress, is represented in TV and other media. Presenting globalization as “inevitable” or “desirable” is an ideological move. When globalization is encoded as an unavoidable fact of our time, it infers that any resistance to globalization is necessarily, hopelessly ineffective and futile. In other words, the desirability of globalization is

another marketing strategy of its exporters. Only its positive aspects are emphasized, and it is portrayed as inevitable.

A Turkish Case of Cultural Globalization

Today, the relationship between globalization or cultural globalization and media can be considered in many different contexts. At one point, the globalization of media signified the worldwide domination of American TV series such as *Dallas*, *Dynasty*, *the Cosby Show*, *Knight Rider*. Nevertheless, proponents of critical audience reception studies have argued that the interpretation of global media texts varies according to cultural context (Ang 1985; Katz and Liebes 1991). This point has become increasingly significant with the advancement of local and regional media, which is creating media systems that are becoming increasingly diverse. For example, Turkey's state television corporation, the Turkish Radio and Television (TRT), offers fifteen different TV channels to its audiences, including TRT Arabic and TRT 6 (in Kurdish). Simultaneously, however, in terms of content and media formats, media products are becoming more homogeneous worldwide, because transnational media flows surpass the boundaries of nation-states. Thus, TV programs such as *Survivor*, *Big Brother*, *Who wants to be a Millionaire?* and *Ugly Betty* are transmitted and watched across the world as popular adaptations. Currently, scholarly debates about media no longer focus on the "Americanization" of local and national media content, and academic discussions about media and cultural imperialism (Schiller 1991; Mattelart 1982) have faded away. Although the successful distribution/dissemination of national television productions to other countries—with their exportation of national values, commodities, life-styles, and ideologies—is related to the country's relative socio-economic and political power within the international arena, no single country is currently exempt from the global circulation of media products and transnational cultural flows. The wide circulation of Turkish melodramas demonstrates that, at present, not only Western cultures have currency beyond their national borders. In fact, non-Western countries enjoy a competitive advantage in some global markets, in that they can take advantage of geographical proximity and cultural immediacy/connections.

The media is the major driving force behind cultural globalization. While it may seem paradoxical, as nation-states seem to be losing their monopolistic control over economic, political, cultural, and legal systems across the globe, national media programs are circulating

more widely and in vastly higher quantities than ever before, as a result of the intensification of globalization processes as well as the global expansion of media conglomerates themselves. For instance, in 2011, “Turkey earned \$60m-plus from exporting over 100 television series to more than 20 countries” (Oxford Business Group, 2012). The exportation of Turkish soap operas has increased considerably as a result of improved distribution techniques worldwide. Since 2005, Turkish dramas have been exported to over 20 countries, including Serbia, Poland, Indonesia, and Vietnam (Hürriyet, December 10, 2011). The discourse concerning increases in the prices of Turkish TV series is another sign of integration of the Turkish television industry with a global media industry. For example, the CEO of one of the leading media exporting companies, Fırat Gülken, says that his business sells each of their series’ episodes for a price ranging from \$500 to \$15,000, a substantial increase over the \$20 to \$50 they charged for the first soap operas they exported in 2005 (Hürriyet, December 10, 2011). As Gülken explains, Turkish soap operas as global cultural products are in demand and are already part of the global cultural economy. Hence, the cultural globalization of Turkish media products cannot be considered apart from economic globalization, since it is tied to a marketing strategy which draws on selling Turkish products in international markets.

However, as Raboy (2002) asserts, “The national state remains the principal mode of political organization and representation for both domestic and international purposes” (p.113). The nation-state, in other words, despite its declining authority, is still the dominant force within and between nations regarding its culture industries. In this sense, Turkish TV series represent national identity and are treated as ideological apparatuses for the dissemination of Turkish culture (Kraidy and Al Gahazzi 2013; Yörük and Vatikiotis 2013).

Huntington’s Clash of Media Civilization

In the context of contemporary debates on Islamic terrorism, and considering the struggle between secularists and Islamists within different countries, Huntington’s argument provides a significant point of analysis to better understand the changes in the global media environment. Huntington suggests that religions tend to be exclusivist and less mutable than other types of cultural beliefs, and are therefore more likely to produce conflict and lead to violence. In Huntington’s terms, “the revival of religion” or “the unsecularization of the world” shows that secularization may be a passing historical phase unique to the West, rather than an enduring,

more highly developed stage of historical development that is gradually spreading throughout the world. Berger claims that “under certain political conditions, it is clear, tensions between global and indigenous cultures can give rise to what Samuel Huntington has called a ‘clash of civilizations’” (Berger 2002: 15).

To understand the recent success of Turkish media products in neighboring regions and in different cultural geographies, a brief overview of the modernization process of the Turkish Republic is helpful. Modern Turkey was established as a nation-state after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, which had extended from Vienna to Yemen and from Iran to Algeria. In the aftermath of World War I, the expansive Ottoman Empire was replaced by the smaller national boundaries that delineate contemporary Turkey. Beginning in the 1920s, Republican elites modeled their plans for the modernization of Turkey on examples provided by the West, primarily those of European countries. As a result, Turkish modernization reflects the dualities, contradictions, and tensions of the Enlightenment found in Europe, such as the dichotomies between modern/ancient, reason/emotion, good/bad, developed/backward, new/old, secular/religious, etc. Even earlier, in the period between the early 1800s and the early 1900s, the main issue tackled in discussions about modernization was the compromises it required between Eastern spirituality and culture with Western technology and development, which inevitably created contradictions (Kadıoğlu 1996; Öztürkmen 1998). Every phase of Turkish modernization has sought to establish harmony between Eastern and Western cultures and to resolve contradictions, but the Republican period marks the radicalization of the modernization process in that wholesale Westernization was adopted in that era. Serif Mardin notes that the values of Ottoman ancient regime were targeted during the Turkish revolution. According to Mardin (1971), the Turkish Revolution was not a *social revolution* but an *ideological revolution*. He says,

The Turkish Revolution was not the instrument of a discontented bourgeoisie, it did not ride on a wave of peasant dissatisfaction with the social order, and it did not have as target the sweeping away of feudal privileges, but it did take as a target the values of the Ottoman ancient regime (p. 202).

In this ancient regime, religion had been an important factor, and so the founders of the Turkish Republic regarded it as a real impediment in attaining the level of contemporary civilization. Turkish modernization manufactured an identity that was basically nationalist and secular. Mohammed Bamyeh claims that “Ataturk’s radical stance against any options other than

secular nationalism was obviously based on what he saw to be the European model” (Bamyeh 2000: 110).

The direction of Turkish modernization, as well as Turkish foreign policy, changed drastically in the 1990s and 2000s. Ethnic and religious identities such as Islamist, Kurdish and Alevi rose in prominence in the 1980s, thereby challenging the modernist Turkish identity and triggering an identity crisis. Escalating criticisms of national identity, regarded as the basis of modernization efforts under the nation-state, indicated that the Turkish project of modernity was in crisis. The AKP’s tremendous success in the 2007 general elections demonstrated that, as Huntington puts it, “the resurgence of Islam” had become the primary factor in the nation’s political, economic, and cultural spheres. With the rise of political Islam, Turkish foreign policy was formulated as “a shift of axis,” repositioning it from West to East. Globalization greatly impacted this modification. The 1980s was a period of “increasing dominance of economic liberalization” as well as the era that fostered a resurgent “political Islam.” As Ergun Özbudun and E. Fuat Keyman (2002) point out, Islamic actors “attribute a positive quality to cultural globalization and articulate it in their discourses as the necessary and indispensable element for new economic life” (p. 298). They add that “it is not polarization but coexistence between globalization and Islam that frames economic life” (Keyman and Özbudun 2002: 298). Such ideas challenge Huntington’s “clash of civilizations” theory. In light of the striking success of Turkish media products, Huntington’s arguments fail to adequately explain the appeal of melodramas from a Muslim country to Balkan and Eastern European audiences. Turkish TV series have spread into neighboring regions as well, becoming highly popular in neighboring Christian countries such as Russia, Greece, and Bulgaria, and in other Eastern European countries including Romania, Ukraine, Hungary, Croatia, and the Czech Republic. Similarly, Brazilian telenovelas that display clear and consistent values of Christianity have been successful in Turkey. Brazilian TV serials, starting with *Escrava Isaura* in the 1980s and followed by *Los Ricos Tambrien Lloran*, *Marianna*, and *Marimar*, became a new passion for Turkish audiences during the 1990s and early 2000s.

Turkish Dramas: Hegemony through Viewing?

Since 2002, the AKP has shown “political, intellectual and moral leadership” (Gramsci 2003), not only within national boundaries but also in the former hinterland of the Ottoman Empire (Oğuzlu 2008; Murinson 2006). Therefore, through the circulation of Turkish melodramas, Turkish cultural forms have been expressed within the national cultures of other societies. Additionally, however, the promotion of Turkey as a model of success have heightened Turkey’s image in the Middle East, Eastern Europe, and the Balkans. In other words, Turkish soap operas are part of a broader cultural, social, economic, and political program through which Turkish culture, national values, and lifestyle are exported to other countries. In the process of becoming a regional actor in an international arena through cultural globalization, Turkey is striving to become a dominant influence in all these regions that have historical, cultural, economic, and social connections with Turkey through its Ottoman past.

As William Roseberry (1996) claims, hegemony should be viewed “not as a finished and monolithic ideological formation but as a problematic, contested, political *process* of domination and struggle” (p. 77). This process, the continual construction of hegemony, is an ongoing project in which struggles over consent are played out. Therefore, struggles over meaning are always related to provisional articulations between global and local cultures. What we see today in Turkey is a new level of participation in the ongoing processes of hegemonic (re)construction by Turkish media production and distribution companies now operating in a global context. In other words, in both local and regional spheres, the media industry functions as a hegemonic apparatus of the nation-state, playing a pivotal role in the dissemination of national program formats, genres, and narratives.

As a result, Gramsci is a significant figure in the quest to understand the relationship between globalization and media in respect to recent developments in Turkey and neighboring regions. Yet it is important to note that globalization is not a unitary phenomenon. Because of differences between countries, each country experiences and practices globalization differently. While globalization is often discussed as a universal, Gramsci reminds us of the specificity of every modern nation-state involved in its processes. The insights provided by studies of television audiences in different countries (Ang 1985; Katz and Liebes 1991) are usefully instructive. These studies show that, while the representations within media products remain constant from country to country, their reception in each country is different. By emphasizing the

regional and national particularities of the various countries engaged in globalization, we can infer that Turkish culture as represented in its melodramas is distinctively experienced, interpreted, and consumed in each instance.

Conclusion

If the globalization of culture is a fact, then understanding the processes of hegemony and cultural globalization is key to grasping the significance of Turkish melodramas in the Middle East, the Balkans, and Eastern Europe. In the early twentieth century, Western countries with sufficient economic power dominated the cultural realm, and their media, in both national and global contexts, exported ideological messages of Western capitalism (Dorfman and Mattelart 1971; Schiller 1976). Clearly, despite its relative autonomy, culture cannot be analyzed by ignoring the objectives of and relations between economic globalization and media, and their effects. In the twentieth century, the economic global system of developed countries infiltrated “third world,” underdeveloped countries with the help of dominant culture industries, expanding the influence of Western meta-culture. At the same time, regional powers such as Turkey gained the economic strength to disseminate their cultural products to neighboring regions and countries. In addition to its geographic proximity, Turkey’s Ottoman past provided cultural touchstones that encouraged transnational articulations and intensified the effects of hegemonic processes. Within this context, cultural goods such as television series do not function as the ideological and hegemonic apparatuses of the West on “the Rest”; rather, local and regional cultures are constantly in flux as a result of the circulation of media content among their own distinctly non-Western countries. Therefore, globalization is not merely a top-down Western project, but rather a process that is local in its effects, that requires consumer consent, and that prevalent influences come from places like Turkey as well as from Europe and the US.

Immanuel Wallerstein asserts that “we end up with a single human society and therefore, necessarily with a world culture” (as quoted in Lie 1997: 144). Wallerstein’s world system analysis explains unequal economic and political relationship between countries. However, flows among three categories of Wallerstein’s theory—the core, the periphery, and the semi-periphery—challenge the process of globalization in which goods and services are exchanged since both products and culture flows to and from different areas of the world. I expect that future research on this subject will reveal that while cultures transcend national borders, they are

continually changed through the globalizing processes of adaptation and reinterpretation. As a result, rather than talking about a clash of civilizations, and although some political scientists and writers have declared the death of ideologies, I am arguing that some global dynamics and struggles within countries can be explained by the clash of regional or national ideologies as they are pressed into global contexts. From this perspective, the clash between the West and the Rest must be analyzed with due consideration of historical developments such as those in Turkey, in light of specific regional trends in media production, content, and circulation, as well as the local cultural contexts that influence reception. Underlining the cultural dimension of problems as situated in specific local or global contexts, Antonio Gramsci says, “[P]olitical questions are disguised as cultural ones” (as quoted in Barrett 1994: 243). Analyses of the cultural and economic success of Turkish melodramas that fail to adequately consider the sociopolitical global superstructure, and especially the crucial concept of hegemony and its processes, can only provide seriously incomplete explanations. Rather than envisioning civilizations clashing, we are better served by examining the struggles of conflicting ideologies disguised as culture.

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