

## The Status of Contemporary Women in a Globalized World

وضع المرأة المعاصرة في عالم معولم

**Bouchenafa Sehaba**

University of Saida Dr Moulay Tahar ((Algeria),

bouchenafa201@hotmail.com

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**Abstract:** There is no doubt that globalization has many benefits for all societies and at all social, economic and cultural levels, whether related to the development witnessed by societies or individuals. For women, globalization has contributed to reducing social restrictions and reducing barriers between them and men, whether by traveling abroad or through the media, which has contributed to this shift in the spread of changing the pattern of family planning, and this is the danger that threatens Arab and Islamic societies that are ignorant of dealing with globalization. Through this research paper, we wanted to shed light on the reason for the impact of globalization on societies in general and on women in particular. This study aims to find solutions and recommendations that enable women to control the mechanisms of dealing with this new phenomenon invented by Western and American societies. Or rather, to make Muslim women American and Western in identity.

**Keywords:** globalization, women, identity, the globalized world, incoming culture

**ملخص:** لا شك أن العولمة لها فوائد عديدة على كافة المجتمعات وعلى كافة المستويات الاجتماعية والاقتصادية والثقافية سواء ما يتعلق بالتطور الذي تشهده المجتمعات أو الأفراد، فبالنسبة للمرأة ساهمت العولمة في تقليص القيود الاجتماعية وتقليص الحواجز بينها وبين الرجل سواء بالسفر إلى الخارج أو من خلال وسائل الإعلام، وهو ما ساهم في هذا التحول في انتشار تغيير نمط تنظيم الأسرة، وهذا هو الخطر الذي يهدد المجتمعات العربية والإسلامية الجاهلة بالتعامل مع العولمة. ومن خلال هذه الورقة البحثية أردنا أن نلقي الضوء على سبب تأثير العولمة على المجتمعات بشكل عام وعلى

المرأة بشكل خاص، وتهدف هذه الدراسة إلى إيجاد الحلول والتوصيات التي تمكن المرأة من التحكم في آليات التعامل مع هذه الظاهرة الجديدة التي اخترعتها المجتمعات الغربية والأمريكية. أو بالأحرى لجعل المرأة المسلمة أمريكية وغربية الهوية. كلمات مفتاحية: العولمة، العالمية، المرأة، خطر العولمة، الهوية.

## 1. Introduction:

The various transformations witnessed by the world today, along with the wide-ranging changes across all levels and fields, are attributed to globalization, or what is commonly referred to as the current era of globalization. This has led to notable developments in the mechanisms of exporting ideas and cultures, just like goods and technologies. It has also resulted in a sharp shift in priorities, goals, and values, leading to a redefinition of the contemporary world with a clear inclination towards new aspirations. A new identity seems to be emerging for the post-globalization human being, as a tangible result of globalization's impact on the cultural particularities of receiving countries. This has led to changes in tastes, emotions, and consciousness, transforming things into commodities whose value is determined by the standards of the "transmitting" culture, which imposes its models on receiving cultures, distorting the features that distinguish each human group from another. Some researchers argue that this new identity, formed due to the globalizing movement and the dominance of its "transmitted" culture, has imposed patterns on the world. Globalization has had a striking impact on women, upending traditional balances, leading to a "globalized" woman living a life vastly different from her accustomed one, creating what is referred to as a crisis of feminine identity.

Thus, we pose the following question: How has globalization affected the current reality of women? What is their reality in the context of the globalized paradigm?

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### **Globalization: Essence and Concept:**

The term "globalization" originates from the English word "global," which first appeared in the United States. It is derived from the word "world" and its plural is "worlds," meaning to make something global, that is, to expand it on a worldwide scale and facilitate its movement without barriers. It also means "sphere," "globe," or "planet," referring to the freedom of movement and the flow of information, ideas, goods, cultural products, media, and even people between all human outputs, where life unfolds as if the world is a single place or small village. Giant corporations raise the banner of globalization to intervene in all countries without restrictions (Jalal Amin, 2009, p. 19).

Among European scholars, Ronald Robertson defined globalization as: "a historical trend towards the shrinking of the world and the increased awareness of individuals of this shrinking." This definition refers to the reduction of distances between individuals and the realization of the concept of universality. The French writer Dolphus similarly defines it as "a total and comprehensive exchange between different parts of the universe, turning the whole world into an interactive station for all humanity," emphasizing that it is primarily an economic exchange phenomenon within global markets.

Some Arab scholars refer to globalization as a growing trend that turns the world into one social, political, and cultural circle where the boundaries between countries dissolve. Through these definitions, we arrive at a fundamental idea: globalization as a historical phenomenon did not suddenly appear but resulted from the crystallization of earlier philosophical ideas, although it speaks a new language in line with the changes of this era. It has its own approach and methods to achieve its goals and address the people.

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Globalization is a system of political and economic principles, social and cultural concepts, media and information systems, behavioral patterns, and ways of life, intended to force the entire world to integrate into it, adopt it, apply it, and live within its framework (Abdul Hamid Mohsen, 2001, p. 97).

### **Political Globalization:**

Political globalization refers to the reduction of the state's role or influence and the idea that multinational corporations and global organizations become partners in political decision-making. In political globalization, the state is no longer the only actor on the global political stage, as multinational entities, international organizations, and global interest groups emerge alongside it. These entities work towards greater interconnectedness, cooperation, and international integration, implying that sovereignty no longer holds the same significance in practice. While states may retain legal sovereignty, practically, they are often forced to negotiate with various international actors, resulting in limitations on political freedoms for globalized nations, as they are not the sole decision-makers (Ahmed Mustafa Omar, 2004, p. 162).

Political globalization is also linked to the emergence of global forces competing with states in the political arena, the most notable being the European Common Market, which established a unified currency governed by the European Central Bank, created in 1999 to oversee the Euro (Mohammad Abed Al-Jabri, 1997, p. 101). Globalization manifests in various other forms, including media globalization, social globalization, and even religious globalization, among others.

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### **Economic Globalization:**

Economic globalization refers to the flow of capital across borders and the ongoing expansion of markets between nations. It signifies the growing economic interconnectedness of countries, driven by the movement of goods and services across borders. One of the key drivers of economic globalization is the increasing importance of information related to production activities, along with rapid advancements in science and technology within markets that adopt these systems. These developments have helped spread the economy of a particular country to all corners of the world, with such cross-border economic information being used to enhance industries globally.

Another factor contributing to economic globalization is the development of transportation, which has reduced the costs of shipping goods around the world, opening new avenues for marketing products beyond national borders. Global production can also be considered an aspect of economic globalization; for instance, parts of a car may be produced in five or more countries before being assembled. (Paul Hirst & Graham Thompson, p. 100). Economic globalization can also be defined as deep interdependence and interaction between economies, facilitated by international banks and multinational corporations, with an increasing role played by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. This interdependence arises through international production, trade, and transactions. Consequently, economic globalization has led to the merging of national and regional economies into a unified global economy (globalized economy).

Globalization has also had a wide-reaching impact on global investment and market integration. However, it has also brought about challenges for Western societies, recognized by the West itself, as a result of excessive economic freedom and dominance (Abdel Wahab Al-

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Messiri, 2000, p. 213). Globalization has also negatively affected Arab societies, leading to rising prices for imported goods in Arab markets, as Arab countries frequently seek to import products resulting from globalization, such as smart electronic devices. Additionally, it has increased global competition in industries related to digital production technology, weakening the Arab economy's ability to compete in this field due to the lack of raw materials necessary to support Arab digital production that can compete with global production. Moreover, the service sector in Arab countries has also been negatively affected due to the trade deficit, which cannot accommodate the constant flow of services, thus hindering the healthy growth of the Arab economy.

### **Cultural Globalization:**

Cultural globalization involves granting full freedom to various cultures to express themselves, expanding from their local and closed framework to broader global horizons, with equal opportunities for all cultures. This would lead to a so-called "dialogue of civilizations," where cultures and civilizations influence one another in a framework of absolute freedom (Turki Al-Hamad, 1999, p. 11). However, in reality, we find the opposite; the flow of information, cultural, and civilizational patterns predominantly moves in one direction from the West to the rest of the world—due to the West's immense media and technological superiority and its ability to shield itself from non-Western cultural influences (Turki Al-Hamad, p. 11).

Cultural globalization focuses on the spread of information, the ease of its movement, and the increase in similarities between groups and societies. It aims to create a global culture, facilitated by the globalization of communications, including satellite television broadcasting and, more profoundly, through the internet, which connects people around the globe. Cultural globalization also involves

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the unification of social values, particularly concerning women and the family. In short, cultural globalization emphasizes the concept of universality a culture without borders driven by advertising, media, communication, and technology (Ali Ajqou).

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One of the most dangerous objectives of globalization is what is known as cultural globalization, which transcends the boundaries established by nations to protect their existence, historical, national, political, and religious characteristics, as well as their natural and human resources and intellectual and cultural heritage. These boundaries ensure their survival, development, and ability to play a significant role in the international community. Cultural globalization seeks to impose capitalist culture as the dominant culture, while also redrawing boundaries that differ from national borders, using global networks of economic, cultural, and taste hegemony. These new boundaries are those of the "cyberspace," which is indeed a new homeland that belongs neither to geography nor to history. It is a borderless homeland without memory, built by electronic information and communication networks.

One of the goals of cultural globalization is the clear and direct attack on the cultural nationalisms of the world. This is achieved by introducing content and imagery rooted in the cultures of the powerful, penetrating the geographical, political, and legal borders of weaker nations. Cultural globalization serves centralized sovereignty and Western dominance (the New World Order led by America), strengthening the meanings of economic and political globalization and exporting this global cultural model to other nations. It aims to strip individual societies of their uniqueness and erase the self-identity of communities, particularly in Arab and Islamic societies, as globalization proponents do not recognize individual identity, whether it be that of a single person, society, state, or nation. Globalization seeks

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to unify global culture, melting it into one, while eliminating cultural plurality and the right to cultural diversity.

Globalization does not just aim to dominate a specific culture; it seeks to negate the concept of culture itself. The dominant culture expresses extreme hostility towards any form of distinction. Western culture wants the entire world to adopt Western materialistic utilitarian standards as the foundation for development and as social and moral values. Consequently, what remains must be eradicated, and what remains is not merely national particularities, but the very concept of particularity (Al-Jabri, Mohammad Abed, 1998). It is not a specific history but the idea of history itself; not a specific identity, but all identities; not a value system, but the idea of values; not a particular human type, but the very concept of the absolute human. Cultural globalization seeks to dismantle all religious, intellectual, and moral constants to create a marginal person without strong, stable roots, one who easily dissolves into the sea of Western capitalist materialistic culture.

Cultural globalization also affects the cultures of societies through the erosion of the original language, such as using Western languages (French and English) as official languages in administration and economics, media, communication, educational curricula, and even for daily communication. Cultural globalization, above all, means stripping states of control over the cultural domain, aiming to disrupt the cultural structure of these states. Naturally, this facilitates the spread of globalized culture, which is the other weapon that globalization traders use to drain the wealth of nations (Abu Zarour, Mohammad Saeed, 1998, p. 13). The primary goal of cultural globalization is to exclude other cultures from the global scene under the pretext of their incompatibility with Western materialistic cultural trends. At the same

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time, it seeks to stifle Arab-Islamic culture, claiming to stop its looming threat to the West.

### **Dealing with Women and Globalization:**

Globalization, or the “new world order,” has encompassed all aspects of life, including human, economic, social, cultural, and media spheres, and has essentially taken control of nearly all societies. It has infiltrated its systems and laws into every country, neighborhood, and even home. This is a clear and undeniable reality. It is noticeable that in the final decades of the 20th century, globalization targeted social and cultural aspects, focusing particularly on the family the nucleus of society and made efforts to weaken the strengths of societies by imposing systems and laws aimed at unifying family and social structures.

The focus of Islam’s enemies was also on women, as they are the cornerstone of the family, the essential element. They knew with certainty that if they succeeded in globalizing her mind and detaching her from her religion and ideological foundation, they would undoubtedly succeed in striking the family at its heart and eliminating the core strengths of human societies in general, and Islamic ones in particular. They used women’s organizations that they fund, women’s conferences, and many other means to achieve their goals. As a result, they managed to impose specific policies and documents that they made binding on countries worldwide (Fatima Omar Naseef, 2001, p. 5).

Global women's unions formed directly after World War II with the intention of resisting colonialism, achieving world peace, and fostering development. Contemporary international attention to women's issues is essentially an extension of Western-origin feminist liberation movements, which arose in response to men monopolizing opportunities in the materialist, trade-dependent Western society. They

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used women's networks and alliances to achieve their goals. Their first meeting took place on March 8, 1908, in Copenhagen, and since then, this date has become International Women's Day. Following that, a series of international conferences and charters emerged as follows:

- On June 26, 1945, newly established states signed the United Nations Charter, whose Articles 1 and 8 established the principle of non-discrimination based on sex, and stipulated that the organization does not impose restrictions on the selection of men and women to participate in its main or subsidiary branches in any capacity.
- In 1946, the Commission on the Status of Women was established under the United Nations. This official international body comprises 45 member states and meets annually to draft recommendations and reports concerning women's issues.
- In 1948, the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" was adopted, with Article 2 stating that: "Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex..." Moreover, the family is recognized as the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the state (Fatima Omar Naseef, p. 22).

The family is the foundational building block of society, which is likely why leaders of what is called the "new world order" have focused on women's issues through international women's conferences. These global forces seek to utilize such conferences as propaganda tools to spread and impose their civilizational model, while formulating a new global social contract by creating and shaping social patterns that mimic Western values, behaviors, and perspectives on humanity, the universe, and life (Amr Abdel Karim Sadaoui, 2001). The International Democratic Women's Union became the reference point for the global

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feminist movement, but as we entered the 21st century, the calls for the globalization of women and women's organizations escalated. There has been a rush to form suspicious women's organizations linked to their counterparts in the West. Their goal is to restructure these associations and unions and revise their programs based on entirely new foundations, differing qualitatively from those during the era of international balance.

Tying Muslim women and women's organizations to global promotional programs based on these foundations is a means to control their movements and limit their potential rise and participation in public life. This follows a well-planned strategy that convinces women they are not marginalized, and that it is inappropriate to follow a policy of isolation and seclusion from the outside world. Not all international women's organizations can be grouped together, but this relationship must ensure the independence of programs and freedom of decision-making in all matters. What the policy of globalizing women and women's organizations truly seeks is to perform special tasks that serve its known ambitions, which include stripping Muslim women of all modest and virtuous moral qualities. It also seeks to dilute the major issues that concern the awareness of both Muslim men and women, who aspire to guide and uplift society.

Those resisting the task of globalizing women and raising the banner of unified global women's organizations aim to open up a wide space to achieve their goals and take control of the fate of the Islamic nation with minimal resistance and at the lowest possible financial and social cost. They place Muslim women between two choices: either progress or regression, compelling them to choose progress and disregard all principles. Women have thus been exploited by the powers of globalization based in Washington, London, and Paris, who took advantage of their ignorance of their religion on one hand, and the fact

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that they do not enjoy the full rights granted to them by Islam on the other. This created distorted images of Muslims, thereby harming the Islamic religion to which they belong (Fatima Omar Naseef, p. 6). Consequently, the new world order has deepened its presence in Islamic societies, exacerbating their marginalization. Additionally, the rigidity of some religious scholars and the interpretation of some Quranic texts according to customs and traditions, along with subjecting certain religious rulings related to women to personal preferences, have deprived women of the rights granted to them by Islam, in the name of religion. This has made women feel wronged and oppressed.

Simultaneously, certain segments of society, influenced by Western thought and lifestyle, desire that Muslim women follow in the footsteps of Western women and reject anything religious or Islamic. Enemies have exploited all these changes and infiltrated Muslim homes, using advocates of so-called women's liberation to implement their plans. To implement their strategies of undermining the structure of Islamic society through women, given the importance of their role in building the family and society, they have held international treaties on human rights and the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, compelling Islamic states to sign them in exchange for financial incentives and compensations. They have also organized international women's conferences.

According to 1997 statistics on Gulf women: \$799 million was spent on perfumes, \$4 million on hair dyes, 600 tons of lipstick were consumed, and \$1.5 billion was spent on cosmetics by Gulf women. They consumed 298,000 kilograms of eye makeup, 96,000 kilograms of nail polish, and 334,000 kilograms of face powder (Abdel Fattah Ahmed, 2001), as well as 599,000 kilograms of skin sun protection products, 4,000 kilograms of skin softeners, 401,000 kilograms of hair curling or straightening products, and 784,000 kilograms of hair dye.

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This illustrates the close connection between these products and the disintegration of the family, weakening of religious adherence, and the spread of alcohol, drugs, and organized crime. Additionally, any Western brand restaurant or store that opens in our countries causes the collapse of dozens of emerging national institutions that cannot compete, further increasing poverty and unemployment rates.

### **European and American Fashion:**

It has been proven that European and American fashions often feature English phrases with sexual and provocative content, as well as anti-religious statements that offend Islamic values, sacred beliefs, and ethics. These fashions promote Western culture, which is based on promiscuity and chaotic freedom in relationships. Zaki Al-Milad says: “We are not the only ones in the Arab and Islamic world to express such concerns. There are even those within the West itself who severely warn against and resist this globalization, with the French at the forefront. Europe in general has started to defend its identity and societal and moral model, opposing what it calls cultural invasion and Americanization, which will only intensify the cultural disparities between Europe and America” (Zaki Al-Milad, 1998, p. 201).

### **Conclusion:**

In the end, we reached a fundamental idea: despite women's exposure to globalization, with its various developments and transformations and the ease of life it provides, women are still marginalized. Many women, in fact, wish to return to the pre-globalization era, focusing on raising children and living comfortably within the family. Globalization has turned the world into a unique factory and a marketplace for anything that can be bought. Under this globalized world, women experience a form of alienation, losing their identity and taking on the role of

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mediators between themselves and the material world. They are playing a different role, promoting or modeling products rather than utilizing their intellectual capabilities or professional skills. This is done by exploiting their bodies to ensure continuous consumer desire by promoting goods and products, reducing the female body to an economic unit designed to maximize profit and attract more benefits. This strips women of their humanity and limits their moral function, leading them to accept new jobs that were previously considered disgraceful, and fundamentally altering values—often negatively. As a result, women are increasingly recognized solely by their bodies and the advantages that come with them. This reality is prominently displayed in global magazines and media imagery.

Furthermore, it became clear that the aim behind the conferences and agreements targeting Muslim women under globalization was to make them doubt their religion. They selectively highlighted certain Shariah rulings, the wisdom behind which many people do not understand. To those unversed in Shariah or ignorant of their faith, these rulings may seem to glorify men and favor them over women. The goal was to undermine the credibility of Shariah rulings related to family, divorce, inheritance, guardianship, and polygamy, among others, in order to dismantle the family the heart of society.

The Islamic family system is exceptionally beautiful and meticulously designed, deserving of reflection and consideration. It is part of the comprehensive Islamic view of life and living beings, where men and women complement each other as two integral halves. No other family system in the world has proven as successful as the Islamic system, which is responsible for preserving the Muslim Ummah and protecting it from extinction despite the many calamities and hardships it has faced.

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Even today, the Muslim family continues to fulfill its role in society, reinforcing its foundations and strengthening its structure. It remains one of the most stable social systems and is a key factor in reducing crime and lowering the incidence of serious diseases among Muslims. The Muslim family, in light of Islam, has been given immense attention, receiving special care through the global message of Islam. The regulations governing it are extremely precise and balanced, ensuring true balance in life.

There are various ways to confront the dangers of globalization, particularly in the field of ethics. It is essential to be vigilant in preserving identity, maintaining core values such as religion and language, and returning to Islam so that both Muslim men and women can feel spiritually grounded, fortified by noble values. The Muslim woman, as an educator, should not be reduced to a mere model for materialistic purposes like advertising. In conclusion, we must approach globalization with awareness and caution, and Muslim women, in particular, should be mindful of how they consume foreign cultures.

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