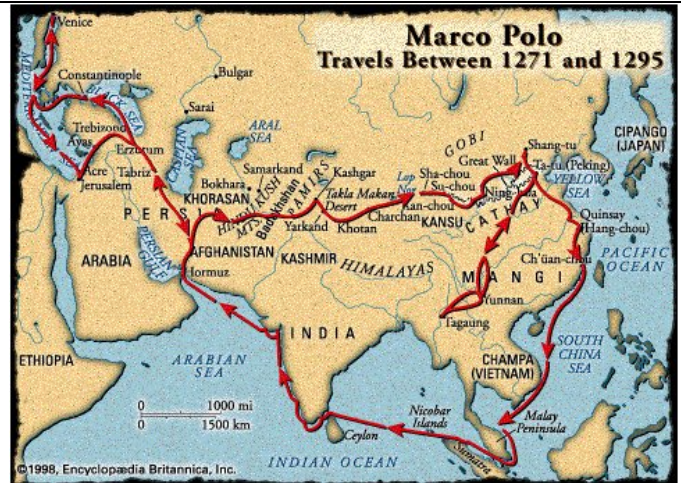


Cultural Diffusion

Cultural Diffusion refers to how something diffuses or spreads. A drop of ink, for example, will spread through a glass of water until the ink and water blend into a single mixture. Plants, animals, goods and ideas are all capable of diffusing in new regions or cultures. Geographers and historians are especially concerned with the patterns that such diffusion takes. They look at the spread of a phenomenon, the speed of its diffusion, the path it takes, and the effects it has on various regions of contact. As with migration, features of physical geography may pose natural barriers preventing or slowing down diffusion.

Chinese Exploration Foster European Exploration

At the time of the Middle Ages in Europe, China developed gunpowder, the compass, and printing. European merchants like Marco Polo brought news of these inventions back to Europe. Borrowing from the Chinese, Europeans copied these products. They used gunpowder to construct cannons and adapted the compass to improve their seafaring skills. These Chinese inventions later allowed the rulers of Spain and Portugal to launch voyages of exploration across the Atlantic Ocean.



The Columbian Exchange:

European and Native American cultures encountered each other for the first time in 1492. This encounter, referred to as the Columbian Exchange, led to the introduction of new products to both cultures. Europeans brought horses, goats, cattle, pigs, chickens, wheat, and goods like cannons, crossbows and steel to the Americas. At the same time, Native Americans had developed many foods unknown to Europeans. An important result of the encounter was that the European diet was greatly improved by the introduction of new foods such as tomatoes, chocolate, potatoes, beans, peppers, pumpkins, squash, sweet potatoes, peanuts, and corn. Europeans also learned how to smoke tobacco.



Cultural Divergence

Over time, many societies experience some degree of cultural divergence. Some members begin to move away from the core values of their culture. Often this happens from exposure to new ideas through processes of cultural diffusion. Physical barriers, like mountains, might also separate members living in different parts of a cultural region. Isolated from one another **over a period** of time, the resulting groups eventually develop completely different cultures. Cultural divergence is when cultures remain separate and aren't influenced by other cultures.

The Roman Empire

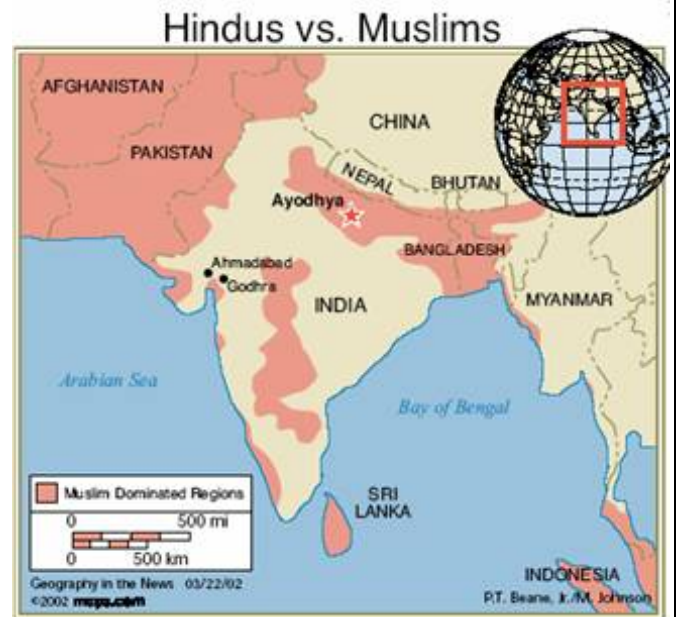
For example, cultural divergence occurred in the later Roman Empire. At one time, this giant empire covered most of Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa. However, waves of Germanic tribes from Northern Europe later attacked the Western part of the empire. These invaders introduced new cultural elements to the Western Roman Empire, while the Eastern Roman Empire, with its capital at Constantinople, fell under the influence of Greek culture. This cultural divergence eventually led the Roman Empire to break apart.



476AD

India

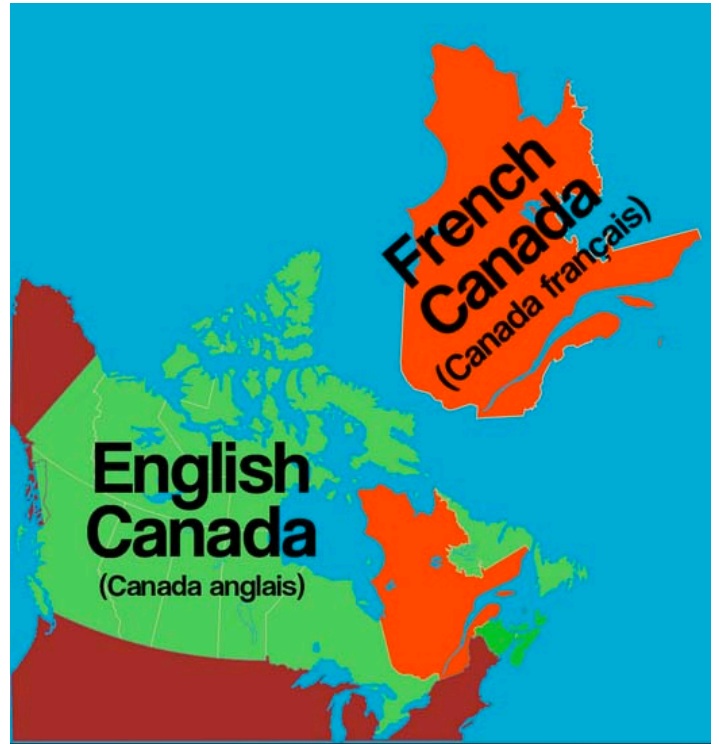
In another example, Aryan India was once unified by a common Hindu culture. But the arrival of Islamic influences from the northwest led India to become divided into Hindu and Muslim areas.



Cultural Divergence

French Speaking Canada

The only way to ensure that Quebecers get to retain their distinct culture is to gain independence as a country and remove themselves from the Canadian federation. A very big issue for certain Quebecers is the threat that an overwhelmingly English-speaking country has on their pocket of distinct French-Quebecois culture[1]. The unrestricted immigration of English-speaking Canadians to Quebec has diluted the culture of the Quebecois and has set off the process of cultural-loss and the highly feared loss of their language[2]. Moreover, whenever Quebec has tried to put in place provisions to protect their culture and language, such as with Bill 101[3], Quebec is called racist and Canadian Federal Courts try to strike down their laws to stop their “discrimination” against English-speaking Canadians in their province[4]. The only way that Quebec can protect its language and culture is to be able to stop the unrestricted flow of English-speaking immigration into its territory and gain complete control over its own law and cultural policy. The only way to do this is to gain independence from Canada.



Source: <http://idebate.org/debatabase/debates/constitutional-governance/house-believes-quebec-should-secede-canada>

Cultural Convergence

Cultural diffusion can also lead to **cultural convergence**, in which different cultures become similar or even come together. For example, at the end of the fifteenth century, European and Native American Indian cultures were completely separate. The Columbian Exchange brought about cultural convergence., European ideas and customs (such as Catholicism, landholding, the Spanish language, and royal government) merged with Native American traditions (such as using tobacco and eating corn, tomatoes, chocolate, and squash) to create a new "Latin American" culture.

Globalization. Today, the rapid pace of cultural diffusion is contributing greatly to cultural convergence. Every society quickly learns, through air travel, newspapers, television, telecommunications, and the Internet — what is happening in other societies. Global transportation and trade make it easier to exchange products with other cultures. Each society borrows or adapts what it finds best in other societies. This cultural convergence has led to the phenomenon known as **globalization** — the creation of a common global culture. We realize that we are all citizens, not only of our own countries, but of a common global community.

New Technology

The spread of new technologies is also contributing to cultural convergence and globalization. At one time in history, different parts of the world did not even know about each other's existence. It took months to reach some places by ship. There were no other means of communication. Today, people in every culture are familiar with telephones, televisions, computers, cell phones, and the Internet. These new technologies link us closer together than at any other time in history.

Even a small home business with access to the Internet can now market its products to people around the globe. Not only can people communicate all around the world, but they also share the common experience of using these technologies. This shared experience and enhanced ability to communicate is helping to build a common global culture.



Cultural Convergence

Global Sports

Even competitive team sports have gone global. With cable television, space satellites and the Internet, people can follow sports taking place in every part of the world. Global cultural convergence is further advanced when teams from different countries come together to compete periodically in international sporting events — such as the Olympics or the World Cup in soccer.

These sporting events appeal to a wide global audience. They bring people together as citizens of a new global community. The rules of the game rise above differences. Sports



contribute to social unity, tolerance and integration. Sports provide a universal language that can bridge cultural gaps, resolve conflicts, and bring about greater understanding among people of different backgrounds and nationalities.

Source:http://www.binghamsplace.com/uploads/4/8/0/5/4805013/cultural_diffusion_and_convergence.pdf

