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## Cultural Imperialism in the Mass Media and the Effects to the Third World Society

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# ABSTRACT

This research will explore one of the most prominent critical stances that have been adopted towards the globalization of cultures: the discourse of cultural imperialism in mass media. It will focuses on the idea of globalization and the arguments surrounding it are increasingly part of our lives and from academic discussions. For example, the complex interplay between economic and cultural aspects of globalization is discussed by Kevin Robins (1997). What Robin's account brings out well are the complexities, the contradictions and ambiguities and the uncertainties in globalization process. Globalization is complicated and perplexing process in terms of the cultural politics it poses for us. The cultural "live experience" of globalization thus be grasped as transformation in the way we experience our everyday local lives as they are increasingly penetrated by distant globalizing forces. The detail of this paper will investigate on cultural imperialism issues that arise from the process of globalization, de-regulation in mass media and the new technology such as internet among society.

Keywords: globalization, cultural imperialism, culture, mass media.

#### Introduction

The idea of globalization and the arguments surrounding it are increasingly part of our lives and the currency of academic discussion. For example, the complex interplay between economic and cultural aspects of globalization is discussed by Kevin Robins (1997). What Robin's account brings out well are the complexities, the contradictions and ambiguities and the uncertainties in globalization process. Globalization is complicated and perplexing process in terms of the cultural politics it poses for us. Robin said that globalization is ordinary. It consequences are matters which confront us every day in our routine lives: when we go shopping, eat in a restaurant, watch television, go to the movies. The cultural "live experience" of globalization thus be grasped as transformation in the way we experience our everyday local lives as they are increasingly penetrated by distant globalization, which the Mexican culture theorist Nextor Garcia Canclini describes as the loss of "natural" relation of culture to geographical and social territories. The broad idea of deterritorialization is that we no longer able to live our lives entirely "locally": our

cultural experiences are pervaded by distance influence. For instances, the food we eat, the music we listen to, the landscapes, images and events we are familiar with on our television screens, our ability to speak by telephone by people on the side of the world, all makes our lives routine more open to the world. As Anthonny Giddens (2000) puts it, globalization means that "the very tissue of spatial experience alters, conjoining proximity and distance in ways which have few parallels in prior ages.

# **Literature Reviews**

### **Globalization, Media and Cultural Imperialism**

The discourse of cultural imperialism as defined by Friedman (1994) tended to set the scene for the initial critical reception of globalization in the cultural sphere, casting the process as an aspect of hierarchical nature of imperialism that is the increasing hegemony of particular central cultures, the diffusion of American values, consumer goods and lifestyles.

The best theory of cultural globalization is cultural imperialism theory. This theory emerged in the 1960s as the part of Marxist critique of advanced capitalist cultures, including their emphasis on consumerism and mass communications. Building on ideas of world-system theory, the theory argues that global economic system is dominated by the core advanced countries while Third world countries remains at the periphery of this system with little control over their economic and political development.

However, it is important to keep in mind that the factors ensure the dominance of a particular type of global culture is constantly changing. American dominance today is based on economic and technological advantages that are probably diminishing as a result of technological changes and changes of other countries. At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the media are on verge of the digital revolution, which will merge the communication, broadcasting and computer industries, such as the internet and hand phone. The speed and variety of communications will increase enormously. These changes will have important effects on cultural globalization.

According to Mohammadi (2000), "We are living in a world dominated by 'cybersociety': it is often hard to assess if this is good or bad, but fo sure, the erosion of (attempted) cultural control by central government is inevitable. No government is able to keep its people away from the influence of transnational media. Certainly, there is a risk to cultural sovereignty from the merchants of culture. The influence of mega media empires erodes the cultural boundaries of nation states of Third Worlds and this creates alarm and defensive reactions.

The West and western capitalism are not going to be removed overnight from the positions of dominance they established over centuries. Therefore, there come the ideas of cultural imperialism that continue to be tempting "re-regulating" critical standpoint, particularly as a focus for policy debates about national cultures.

The theory of cultural imperialism is similar to ideas developed by the Frankfurt School in Germany insofar as it presupposes a relatively homogenous mass culture that is accepted passively and uncritically by mass audience. The strong version of cultural imperialism theory refers to the imposition upon other countries of a particular nation's belief, values, behavioral norms and style of life. Cultural imperialism is defined as kind of cultural domination by powerful nations over weaker nations (Baran, 2012). It viewed as purposeful and intentional because it corresponds to the political interest for example in the United States and other powerful capitalist societies. The effects of this type of cultural domination, reflecting the attitudes and values of the Western, particularly American, capitalist societies, are viewed as extremely pervasive and as leading to the homogenization of global culture. The Americanization process becomes far more formidable when the fundamental concepts of a society's national identity are remodeled in the American image. The concept of cultural imperialism is inherently vague and implies a negative evaluation of a behavior and intentions of advanced countries, particularly in the first world countries like United States, towards the poorer countries. Critics have argued that the term of "imperialism" which can be seen as imposition of power from rich to poor, from powerful to the weak, implies a degree of political control by political countries that no longer exist. According to John Tomlinson (1991), "The idea of imperialism contains the notion of a purposeful project: the intended spread of a societal system from one center of power across the globe." He contrasts imperialism with the concept of "globalization," which suggest the interconnection and independency of all global areas, "happening" in a far less purposeful way". Despite its weaknesses, cultural imperialism, re-conceptualized as media imperialism, remains a useful perspective because it can be used to analyze the extents to which some national actors have more impact than others in global culture, and therefore are shaping and reshaping cultural values, identities and perceptions. Tomlinson further defined cultural Imperialism as the invasion of an indigenous people's culture, through mass media, by outside powerful countries. Therefore it can also be known as cultural imperialism in mass media. The media is either printed like book, newspaper, magazines or in the form of broadcasting like radio, television, internet or other forms of electronic media.

Powerful countries like Europe and United States produce and sell a lot of media program to Asia and the Third World country such as drama series, cartoon and film. Our television stations tend to buy outside program, through the acquisition to fill up the airtime in the channel. Concerns over the contents that shown obscenity, pornography and inappropriate languages have been debated as issues long ago as the contents have direct and indirect effects and influence towards viewers especially sent to kids and teenagers. The media contents were blamed for brought such the "invasion to the Third World indigenous culture" especially to the Muslim communities.

## The Frankfurt School Perspectives; The USA and the Mass Culture

Mass culture offers precisely the kind of personality traits that made the population vulnerably to fascist domination. The Frankfurt writers believed, incorrectly that the USA was also about to become fascist as Germany had done before. The Frankfurt analysis of the role of the press, films and later television is very similar to that of literacy critic F. R Leavis. Broadcasting, Leavis argued in 1932, was 'little more than means of passive diversion but one that made active recreation, especially active use of mind, more difficult.' In an essay called "Mass civilization and minority culture," he concluded that "The prospects of culture, then, are very dark. There is less room for hope, in that a standardized civilization is rapidly evolving the world".

According to the Frankfurt School, the unique of individual personality was being destroyed by the society. The mass media is a key agent of social process. They replaced the real culture values with their "look alike." This view that the media provide false and inferior culture is an important element in the Frankfurt explanation of totalitarianism, which assumes that many of the changes brought about through the media would be fought if they were recognized. In conclusion, the Frankfurt agreed that the new mass media were not merely a tool of totalitarianism; they were major reasons for the fascism existence.

The view also believed that radio, film, popular music and television share an overriding concern to entertain. This was the ultimate form of corruption. Indeed of this writer, entertainment occupies much the same kind of role as self-abuse in pre-Freudian

medical literature. Entertainment release promised relief and relaxation but Rosenberg argued "Far from dispelling unrest, all the evidence on how now suggests that mass culture exacerbates it. Indeed the atomized individuals of mass society lose their soul to the phantom delights of the film, soap opera, and the variety shows. They fall into a stupor. This apathetic hypnosis Lazarsfeld was to call the "narcotizing dysfunction" of exposure to the mass media (Baran, 2012).

# Cultural Imperialism in Mass Media through Entertainment and Advertising

All media industries compete to create entertainments for audience. Even with news and documentaries, the pressure to be "entertaining" is to hold the audience by being immediately accessible and stimulating while overrides other consideration, for instances our cultural value and religion. A high proportion of media content has no other aims but to amuse, falter, excite, mystify, or titillate the public and so keep its attention. Entertainment thus led to blindness and lunacy. It is becoming increasingly plain,' wrote Adorno in the Authoritarian Personality," that people do not behave in such a way as to further their interest, even when it is clear to them what these interest are." People it was argued became insensitive to their own needs, for example their own religion needs. For instances, tv station showed a clip video that contains half nude and obscenity scene even though it is against the religion taught.

The Frankfurt School argued that leisure, empty time filled with entertainment had been industrialized. The production of culture had become standardized and dominated by profit motives as in other industries.

TV programs especially that covers the entertainment always shows off the Western as an idol. The program also filled up with the obscenity and pornography and does not portrayed a good image but can influence children who watch it. Not only for adults' TV program but the cartoon served by local channel also has the bad impact to the children because the content can bring the aggressive and sexual behavior to them or even to the teenager's lifestyle, dressing and way of talking.

Other than through the entertainment, the advertising also another aspects we can look how the media imperialism spreads in the Third world societies. Advertising is not only as window to culture, but also as mirror that reflects the culture or the cultures. Part of the roles of advertising can change social, cultural and business environment not only to developed countries but is so pervasive to less developed and developing world. It has shaped the society and sometimes creates Western cultural colonization in third world countries.

In the case of print media, magazine publishers nowadays preferred "an international look" in the design, products and contents to attract more readers. Western culture is claimed to be profitable and marketable for the audience. As a result, international product and brand was on the top of people's choice and we become less conscious to our local brand. The "injection" of western culture has blamed invaded a country's indigenous culture especially to Muslims in the Third World countries and around the world.

# The Global Village; the Internet and New Media

In the 1960s, the Canadian media theorist Marshall McLuhan coined the term 'the global village' to designate the new mass media situation, where especially television, in his view, would create shared frames of reference and mutual knowledge between people across the globe. In this period, global change; economic, environmental, political have become the subject of many new scholarly books. Some used the term development, intimating that poor countries would eventually 'catch up with' the rich ones. Others

preferred to use the word 'imperialism', suggesting that the rich countries were actively exploiting the poorness and preventing them from developing (for example, Frank 1975; Amin 1980). The term 'Westernization', usually used in a derogatory way, became common. Around this time, Immanuel Wallerstein developed his influential worldsystemtheory (Wallerstein 1974–9), which traced the development of the contemporary world's system to the intercontinental trade beginning in the fifteenth century. In Wallerstein's view, a permanent international division of labour subsequently developed, dividing the globe into the core (the rich countries), the periphery (the poor countries) and the semi-periphery countries like Russia, Brazil and China (Eriksen, 2007).

Government of a country could once physically prohibit the introduction and distribution of unwanted newspapers, magazines and books had to work harder at jamming unwanted radio and tv broadcasts. But they could do it until the satellite came along. Governments cannot disrupt satellite signals. Only lack of necessary receiving technology is cheap, easy to use, and on the desks of more and more millions of people in every corner of the world.

You-Tube for instances, allowed borderless access to the people, and children can access to other form of prohibited videos that contains pornography and aggression scene. The technology developed by the powerful countries like USA has injected to our people's mind and behavior and we as Third World countries now has become dependent on the technology created by them.

New convergence in hand phone technology such as General Packet Radio Service (GPRS), Multimedia Messaging Service (MMS) and mobile TV enables people to communicating to each other and to get the information without restrictions.

It cannot be denied that due to this communication technological development we gained benefits to our socio-economic systems. It helps the developing and less developed society to produce more skilled workers in the industry. It is also undeniable that we uses these technologies and depends to it to communicate, get information and to have some entertainment. However, overuse and overdependence to these media tools sometimes could bring harms that good. For instances, addiction to smart phone could damaging the family system, raises marital problem and imposing children to unnecessary information (The Star, 5<sup>th</sup> Jan 2012). The less developed and third world countries have adapted this culture and the effects are so pervasive that we could have seen especially in modernizing the 'look' of Muslims society.

## The Monopoly of Network Owners and Distributors from the First World Countries

Even though the Telecommunication Act 1996 has changed the ownership limit, but one area of ownership philosophy that did not change significantly in 1990s was the minority ownership of broadcast facilities. In U.S around 1970s, the Federal Constitution Commissions (FCC) developed policies giving minority applicants some advantage in the acquisition of licensing for new stations. The majority group and FCC claims that the dividends of this policy include a significant increase in station ownership by Black Hispanic groups, but minority ownership still far short of the proportion of minorities in the general population.

Back to the history on 1940s – 1950s, when TV and FM radio developed, the three major networks – NBC, CBS, and ABC. The Fox Network was created in 1986 and Fox now owns 23 stations in 22 cities. Most of the current cable networks are owned wholly or in part by one or more of the major media organization from USA and first world countries. The largest multi system cable owner (MSOs) is AT&T with more than 16 mill subscribers while the second highest was the Time-Warner Cable. By the early in 1980s, several more cable networks were in existence, including CNN, ESPN, Nickelodeon and

MTV. Many of these and a multitude of later cable networks were owned, part, by the major MSOs. (Bagdikian, 2004)

The International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems (MacBride Report, 1980) has pointed out the need to devote special attention "to obstacles and restrictions that derive from the concentration of media ownership, public or private, from commercial influences on the press and broadcasting, or from private or governmental advertising" (Recommendation 57). The commission also drew attention to the 1952 Convention on the International Right of Correction (Recommendation 48), thereby expressing its desire to place the right to communicate at the world system level. The concept of the right to communicate includes the right to be informed, the right to inform, the right to privacy, and the right to participate in public communication (Recommendation 54). Gunaratne (1998) has elaborated on the parallels between the views of the Hutchins Commission and the MacBride Report, the concentration of media ownership has become more pronounced as a result of several developments accentuating capital accumulation, e.g., the demise of the socialist bloc, and the USA-led worldwide promotion of free-market philosophy.

At the same time, when some of the policy debates were taking place in UNESCO, a parallel critique was developing in the work of critical media and communications scholars. Thus in 1971, Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattleart published in Chile their classic ideology critique, *How to Read Donald Duck;* imperialist ideology in the Disney comic, in which they argued that Disney comics, widely distributed in the Third World, not only caricatured and denigrated the cultures of these countries but also contained a covert ideology message;" Underdeveloped peoples takes the comics at second hand, as instruction as the way they are supposed to live. As Martin Barker summarizes their arguments; "American capitalism has to persuade the people it dominates that the American way of life is what they want." American superiority is natural and in everyone's best interest.

However, one of the important features distinguishing critiques like Dorfman and Mattleart's from simple "anti-Americanism" is the way the USA is made representative of a larger cultural threat: the spread of multinational capitalism. This is also the theme of Herbert Schiller's approach. Schiller is one of the most well-known and prolific writers on cultural/ media imperialism and has maintained a more or less consistent position since the 1960s. Schiller (1991) has focused on the role of multinational corporations, in particular of transnational of media corporations, in the "modern world system". Crucial to an understanding of transnational media dynamic, in his view in the experience of USA where the utilization of public information channels for the objective of corporate business system occurs in its most pure system. The apparent effect of saturation, through every medium of the advertising message, has been to create package audience whose loyalties are tied-to a brand name product and whose understanding of social reality is mediated through a scale of commodity satisfaction. It is the consumerism that, according to Schiller, has been exported throughout the world by multinational capitalism.

Economic realities greatly influence the international flow of news and entertainment too. News and entertainment combine with America's highly effective industrial, military transportation, and technological presence worldwide to create and sustain favorable conditions for maintaining its social interests. All the relatively developed nations (the 'core' countries) use modern communications technology to conduct business and represent their economic priorities and cultural values globally. According to Smith (1980), the major Western international news agencies – Associated Press (AP), United Press International (UPI), Reuters, and Agence France Presse (AFP)

have spread culturally biased journalistic reports throughout the world. Domination of global news reporting and the continued spread of the English language were made possible by developments in communication technology (Lull, 2000).

#### National and Organizational Strategies toward Cultural Globalization

Since World War II, the power of multinational corporations from the United States, Europe, and Japan have come to dominate much of world trade. The Multilateral Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and the formation of the World Trade Organization (WTO) further contribute to an increasingly singular world economy.

The clear problem of cultural imperialism can found primarily in a relationship between the first and the Third world countries. Although it can be track back to criticism of the imposition of European culture in this process of eighteenth to nineteenth century colonialism, this strand of cultural imperialism argument really takes off in the late of 1960 – 1970s. One important concept here was a series of debates in the United Nations and particular in its specialized cultural affairs agency, United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural organization (UNESCO). These debates originated in concerns about imbalances in the flow of information between the developed and developing countries and the control of media and communications by the West.

As a result, MacBride Report was released by the UNESCO in 1980. The main purpose of the report was to set up a study on how to maintain national and cultural sovereignty in the face of the rapid globalization of mass media. The main concern at that time was the issue of news coverage was dominated by the West and the Westernproduced content that was overwhelming the developing countries that bring the Western cultural value. The news dominated from the U.S through their CNN channel, etc and many information and news about the Muslims are still kept hidden. The Mac Bride Report then called for the New World Information Order (NWIO), endorsed by the UNESCO. It concluded that individual nations should be free to control the news and entertainment that entered their lands. It means that the monitoring of all such content, monitoring and licensing of foreign journalist and requiring prior government permission be obtained for direct radio, tv and satellite transmissions into foreign countries. But the debates soon developed into much broader attacks on the cultural dominance of the West and were, arguably influential in the eventual withdrawal from UNESCO in 1984, and in 1985, of both USA and the UK.

On the heels of this were New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO), which aimed to address imbalances in the political economy of media and information systems. The NWICO brought together most of scholars active in political economy of communication around the world that produce basic research by Nordenstreng an Varis, policy analyses by Somavia, and by Preston et. al., on assessments of the movement itself, included how Western media worked to undermine it (Vincent Mosco, 1996).

Supporters of cultural de-regulation for their part might accuse critics of cultural imperialism of being the real regulators. For the cultural policy options most generally proposed to deal with the encroachment of alien cultural goods and practices are various forms of protectionism, which can range from the imposition of tariffs on cultural imports to more radical measures like banning of satellite dishes that has become a (controversial) feature of cultural policy in several Islamic countries.

For instances, satellite dishes have been illegal in Saudi Arabia for a number of years and during 1995 similar bans were declared in Bahrain, Egypt and Iran. Such measures are highly controversial within the states involved, extremely difficult to implement and further complicated by the desire of these countries to utilize the satellite

technology themselves. In Malaysia for example, legislation banning the use of parabolic antennas passed in 1988 was due to be lifted at the end of 1995 to allow to access to the Malaysian government's own MAESAT satellite (BBC Monitoring, 30<sup>th</sup> June, 1995, pg 11).

In Iran, the banning ordered issued in April 1995 followed by year of heated debate and a number of ambiguous government statements demonstrating reluctance to enact unpopular regulation. With an estimated half of a million dishes in homes in Tehran alone, it is entirely unclear how the ban is to be enforced, and they were immediate calls for special provisions to be made for access of journalists, research, scholars and others. However, despite of the massive practical, political and technical difficulties of this sort of protectionist legislation, its cultural ideological rationale is quite clear. Hoijat Taqavi, the Head of Iranian Majlis (parliament committee) on the Islamic arts and guidance said that the ban: "This is one way of the curbing of the cultural assault, ...we showed the world that we are against foreign culture, that is we will never be subservient to the culture and invasion by foreigners." (BBC Monitoring, 1995). So this policy is by no means restricted to the Islamic world or the Third world more generally. Cultural protectionism is very much alive in the West in 1990s.

In the late 1990s, for instance, Canada removed all USA-made television programs from its prime time schedule. Headed by the fiercely protectionist French delegation in 1996, the European parliament voted to limit video on demand and n-line services. Such limits and bans are common. In September 1993, a lobby group from the French audiovisual industry, with the support of EU cultural ministers, succeeded in placing the issue of film and television imports from the USA to Europe at the centers of the GATT agenda. The Europeans, particularly the French, demanded that the trade in audio visuals be left outside the GATT agreement, allowing them to continue in various ways to restrict the flow of American films and TV programmes into their countries. The American position as might be imagined was that any such exclusions world contravenes the free trade principles on which GATT rests. The outcome of the dispute, forced largely by the pressure to conclude by the negotiations by 15 December 1993, when President Clinton's mandate to negotiate ran out was that the audio visual products were left out of the final treaty. However this was not seen as clearly victory for the Europeans but as unresolved in 1996 but there is every expectation that the audio visual sector will become included in future world trade agreement. Third Nations like Brazil, Mexico and other European countries like Canada, Italy, and Sweden have met at Ottawa to develop their "ground rules" to protect their national cultures from the "Hollywood juggernauts" after the TV Without Frontiers" established by the European Community and the action of reducing tariffs on media materials entering their continents from the United States in GATT.

# Conclusions

Now, clearly the major concern of the debate was simply the protection of the economic interest in the media industries in Europe against the tide of US import. So do the Third World. But the question is does the GATT argument really tell us about the protectionism/ cultural imperialism issue? Cees Hamelink in his book, The Politics of World Communication (1994) has discussed the GATT talks and he recognize that the GATT debates is complex at the number of levels and it is not always easy to separate out economic from the cultural issues and positions. For example, the question of "cultural dumping" is at one level, purely an economic argument. American media producers can generate sufficient income from their large domestic market to recoup production costs and allow them to sell films and television shows at enormous discounts in oversees market: one discounted price for Europe and another for the Third World. Though this is

sometimes represented by American producers as "subsidizing" world television, it has obvious effect of squeezing out competition and in Third World in inhibiting the development of media production. But the dumping also of course has cultural implications beyond cultural industries and their immediate interest. For the numbers of American movies and television shows on European screen is in indirect relationship to these economic processes within the increasingly de-regulated market. Government intervention has been justified as an exceptional measure that will make subsequent interference unnecessary and restore a stable and competitive market. Thus, for example, in 1927, a Board of trade inquiry into a film industry had advocated a special measure to deal with unfair, devious and improper trading by American competitors. This report resulted in the Cinematography Act 1927, which banned block booking (when good film are sold in package with a number of less desirable Hollywood products) and obliged distributors and exhibitors to purchase and show quotas of British films. However, the capacity of national governments to control the dissemination of culture within their borders has been greatly diminished by recent technological developments, such as satellite broadcasting, and international trade policies favoring de-regulation and privatization that have increased market penetration by foreign companies. According to John Street (1997), "As more television is transmitted by satellite, the less significance attaches to national borders and presumption of national control."

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