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## **The Global Imperialism Project: Lessons from Television, Movies and Radio**

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### **Abstract**

Old and latest trends in discussions in the sphere of the role of mass communication in media and cultural imperialism have centred on cultural hegemony and cultural colonialism among other such lines of ideological debate. Some debates have also pointed to globalization as the only way to spread development across the world. Others see globalization as portending some dangers for the cultures of developing countries as they will end up being annihilated. Based on the premise that mass communication and mass media have led to cultural imperialism in the world, the essay uses the cases of music, television programming, television news and films to discuss how United States of America, especially, has dominated the cultures of other countries through the latter's consumption of American cultural products. Pivoted on the cultural imperialism theoretical framework, the discussion moved a step further by looking at the concept of cultural/media imperialism as Americanization of both the media and the cultural landscapes of the world and no more a generalization of Western countries dominating the cultures of developing countries – this is because some of the Western countries themselves have become victims of this phenomenon of Americanization. It is now therefore the issue of Americanization of the cultures of the world.

**Key Words:** hegemony, media, mass communication, imperialism, globalization

### **Introduction**

Communication is very vital and quintessential in all levels of human endeavour. Every society under the sun thrives on communication to maintain homogeneity. Communication serves as the pivot and fulcrum upon which the different elements of the society hinge. Communication – be it whichever type; that is within the continuum of interpersonal or machine mediated; in this case, mass communication –

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serves as the bedrock of the sum total of the values, mores, traditions, cultures, economic, religion, political and education among other important aspects of a society's life. The rich history and folklore of most societies were kept and recorded by word of mouth until the advent of new communication technologies; with its classical landmark example being advancement in writing with the invention of Guttenberg's removable type printing technology around 1445. Other technologies have followed through since then with the invention of the telegraph, the telephone, the radio, the television and finally the internet and new media among other forms of technologies that facilitate effective flow of information from a sender (source) to a recipient. Since the study of communication became a discipline, scholars have made inroads into different aspects of the discipline which includes mass communication and mass media. This article attempted an assessment of the role of mass media in facilitating America's cultural imperialism in the world.

### **Literature Review**

Most studies on culture and the media reveal an unfair balance between the strengths of the cultures of the Western capitalist economies and the cultures of the Third World countries which are bedeviled with economic challenges. These economic challenges give way to a kind of subjugation from the Western world which includes culture. Attempts have been made by some scholars to argue in favour of globalization. Winseck and Pike (2009) looked at the factors that led to the rise of global media system around the world after the mid-1860s. Moreover, Ugo (2009) examined three interconnected cultural phenomenon – media globalization, the rise of new media cultures and the emergence of new discursive spaces by the young people of Nigeria. The globalization that facilitated a blurring of cultural and media boundaries has led to an unfair treatment of the developing countries. Alozie (2010) examined the extent of use of Nigerian cultural symbols in some selected ads in the Nigerian mass media. Grounding his research in the semiotic analysis, the study found among other things that ads in the Nigerian media did not employ Nigerian ethnic or national symbols; and in particular, a Sharp ad employed Western signs and symbols to the neglect of Nigerian ones.

However, as some scholars have been arguing, attempts have been made by some developing countries to wean themselves off this cultural domination riding on the wings of globalization. Straubhaar (1991), using Brazil as a case, focused on how attempts have been made by Brazil in a shift from normal dependency toward a greater but still asymmetrical interdependency in media imperialism. The discussion drew a relationship between television flows versus national television production based on the idea of asymmetrical interdependence. Additionally, Jin (2007) showed a situation of counter cultural imperialism phenomenon in the case of South Korea in the face of rapid growth of its domestic cultural industries and its exports to the East and South Asian regions. Though the article admits a complexity of the situation, the US still dominates the Korean cultural market through both cultural products and capital, Korea now exports television programmes and films to its neighbours in the region.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Potter argued that the scholarship about the mass media has grown so large and become so fragmented that it is very difficult for scholars to understand the incredible array of great ideas and findings that have been produced. Thus, a lot of theories have been espoused to support different researches in mass communication and it is obvious that more theories are yet to be propounded. This discussion would be supported by one of such theories: Cultural Imperialism.

Herbert Schiller, a key figure in both communication research and public debate over the role of the media in modern society, is associated with the cultural imperialism theory. Cultural Imperialism theory

postulates that Western nations dominate the media around the world which then results in a powerful effect on Third World Cultures by imposing on them Western views and thus results in the destruction of their already existing native and indigenous cultures. According to Croteau and Hoynes (2003), the argument is that,

...the media products emerging from the West ... so powerfully shape the cultures of other nations that they amount to a cultural form of domination. Here the link between ownership and media content is made explicit. Values and images of Western society ... are embedded in the media products sold by Western corporations. Norms of individualism and consumerism ... pervade media products exported by the west and often conflict with the traditional values in the nations where such are sold. The flow of media products ... results in the erosion of local cultures and values (p. 355).

Cultural imperialism also refers to the process in which national cultures are overwhelmed by the importation of news and entertainment from other countries – mainly the United States and other industrialized nations. This theory almost always is directly linked to media imperialism as they both postulate the same thesis of America's dominance of the media of most countries; especially, developing countries and as confirmed by Taberez Ahmed Neyazi (2010). This phenomenon will be demonstrated within the Ghanaian context.

Neyazi (2010) argued that interest in the theory has been rekindled with the disintegration of the USSR in 1991 which has led to an acceleration of the process of globalization and fears of domination of American ideologies and points of view advanced through the worldwide expansion of global media.

Citizens of most countries, according to Dominick (2002), are concerned that their national and local heritage would be replaced by one global culture dominated by American values, ideologies and by extension, lifestyle. They opine that American music, books, TV shows, news, films and other educative and entertainment artefacts are popular around the world. They are of the trepidation that audiences will become persuaded to adopt the values projected in this content; that is capitalism, materialism, consumption, among others. Thus, if care is not taken, it will become a situation of cultural domination and possible adulteration of pre-existing cultures.

However, this theory, just like other mass communication and media theories, is not immune to criticisms. The cultural imperialism theory which purports to present the audience as very passive, falls flat in the 'Encoding/Decoding' theory of Stuart Hall in 'effects' of audience studies. Touching on encoding and decoding as a theory of TV audience research by making reference to his essay 'Encoding and Decoding' (1980), Matt Hills in his article 'Television and its Audience: Issues of Consumption and Reception', quotes Stuart Hall as saying that audiences could decode, that is interpret or understand, texts in one of three ways; that is audience could produce 'preferred' readings which fitted with the meanings 'encoded' or placed into a text; they could entirely reject these intended meanings, and so produce resistant or 'oppositional readings' or they could accept certain intended meanings and reject others, thereby producing 'negotiated' meaning.

Moreover, Croteau and Hoynes (2003), citing Tunstall (1977), raised two criticisms of the cultural imperialism theory. Firstly, researchers questioned the early claims of powerful effects, indicating that the media capacities of other nations quickly allowed them to make productions of their own programming, thus reducing their dependence on American shows. Secondly, interest shifted away from a focus on television toward a broader, more generalized understanding of the influence of different media – including everything from radio to music and comic books. In the area of capital-intensive media products like film, American dominance got to global dimensions. In less expensive

and easily produced media formats, there was an upsurge in programming as well as development in regional export centres.

But ultimately, the cultural imperialism theory, in spite of its purported limitations, is very useful in a study as this. Therefore, the theory would be used to support the discussion on the role mass communication has played in bringing to bear this phenomenon of cultural/media imperialism in the world today.

### **Mass Communication and Development**

The advantages gained from the mass communication and mass media practice in the world cannot be underestimated. Even though so many theories have been propounded as regards the negative effects of the media, the industry contributes immeasurably and unquantifiably to the development of nations and the world in general. Mass communication and mass media has engendered a platform for mass education and the dissemination of vital information at national and regional levels.

The issue of globalization, which has been criticized mainly for its cultural hegemonic character is positive to the extent that it allows the flow of ideas and information across geographical borders and boundaries and ends up making the world one place; thus, encouraging people to interact with others from other cultures and getting to know them and thereby reducing the potency of racism and racial discrimination.

### **Mass Communication and Culture**

Mass communication, perhaps one of the most popular branches of communication in recent times, is continually and constantly gaining more intellectual and stake holders' attention. Many researchers have given it much attention than the other areas of communication because of the advent of the internet and new media which has engendered a convergence among all the forms of the old media.

Mass communication refers to the process by which a complex organization with the aid of one or more machines produces and transmits public messages that are directed at large, heterogeneous and scattered audiences. It is also explained to be a form of communication system that reaches massive numbers of people or it is seen as the actual process of designing and delivering media texts to mass audiences. Baran and Davis (2012) also asserted that mass communication occurs when a source, typically an organization, employs a technology as a medium to communicate with a large audience. Closely linked to mass communication are the key concepts of mass media, mass culture and mass society which are all vital in comprehensively appreciating the sense of the term mass communication.

The media and culture have always been bedfellows. That is, there has always been a strong linkage between the media and the culture of any group of people who consume that kind of media. Media wherever its presence is felt, reflects the culture of the people whether positively or negatively. Thus, one way to appreciate and comprehend the impact of the media on the lives of any group of people is to explore the cultural context in which the media operate. Wood (2006) posited that communication can be understood only within its particular systems or contexts and that culture is one of the most important systems within which communication occurs. Culture directly moulds how people interact within a society.

The definition of culture can be a bit difficult as it embraces many things. However, various attempts have been made at defining the concept. Marcel Danesi (2009) explained culture to be the arts, beliefs, language(s), institutions, rituals, etc., practiced by a specific group of people. Wood (2006) on the other hand, explained culture simply as a way of life; that is, it is a system of ideas, values, beliefs, structures and practices that is communicated by one generation to the next and that sustains a particular way of

life. Finally, culture is seen as the common values, behaviours, attitudes and beliefs that bind a society together.

Culture can be viewed in a much complex sense and from a bigger perspective in the ways in which people live their lives and represent themselves at a particular given time to others outside their domain. It thus encompasses the modes and styles of dressing, religion, architecture, education, sports among other items. It also includes a society's artefacts and artistic items. In recent times the mass media of a community or country becomes an integral part of a community's life. Culture embodies the totality of the modes of communication and all the technologies that are associated with them; including the creation and use of symbol systems that convey information and meaning.

Therefore, for any mass media outlet to deliver effectively, thus serving as a good platform for communication, there should be absorption of the elements of the culture of the context in which the media outlet is situated. Every mass media company thus positions itself strategically to project and reflect the cultural ideals of its society of operation.

### **Globalization and Culture**

Globalisation is one concept which cannot be wished away in any discussion which has got something to do with cultural exchange, whatever the discipline. Globalization has to do with all those processes by which the peoples of the world are incorporated into a single world society. In the context of this discussion, it can then conclude that the content of the communication – in this case globalisation – will be passed on not only from generation to another but it will be moved from one geographical setting to another; both in terms of space and time.

Globalisation has always had on its trails some level of impact on already existing cultures wherever it is introduced. Globalisation, which mainly spreads through mass communication technologies goes with new ways of doing things and new ideas about the already existing culture; thus, resulting in a paradigm shift. Jan Art Scholte (2000) identifies the following five areas of opinions about globalization. He argues that one notion of globalization is it being conceived in terms of internationalization, where it is simply another adjective describing cross-border relations between countries; thus, designating a growth of international exchange and interdependence. When this happens, the obvious being interdependence and exchange should occur but, in a situation where one culture is somehow superior to the other, the less powerful is forced to accept the culture of the other which thus results in total jettisoning or adulteration of the culture of the less developed in terms of technology and resources. The second notion is liberalization, which has to do with the removal of government-imposed restrictions, thus creating an open, borderless world economy, leading to an international economic integration. The third notion is universalization. The proponents of this notion about globalization, according to Scholte (2000), foresaw a planetary synthesis of cultures in a global humanism; where 'global' here means worldwide. So, imagining a situation like this communication, whose culture then becomes the international standard? The higher culture then would, leaving the less developed cultures to imbibe other people's cultures to the neglect of their own. The fourth idea presents globalization as Westernization or modernization. From this, globalization then becomes a process whereby social structures of modernity (capitalism, rationalism, industrialism, bureaucratism, etc) are spread to the world over, thus, destroying pre-existent cultures and local self-determination in the process. The fifth and final notion which Scholte (2000) presents has to do with 'deterritorialization' or the spread of 'supraterritoriality.' Globalisation entails a reconfiguration of geography, so that social space is no longer wholly mapped in terms of territorial places, distances and borders.

All the above ideas about globalization show a direct correlation between it and an effect on pre-existing cultures, thus making the world a unified place by bridging the gap between space and time. This is what has been happening with the mass communication and the role it plays in amalgamating the different pre-existing cultures and moulding them into one global culture; thus, blurring the differences and most importantly, leading to situations where ‘superior culture’ by virtue of their economic and technological advancements end up most of the times submerging and subjugating already existing perceived ‘inferior cultures’.

### **Globalization and Mass Communication**

The relationship between mass communication and communication in general and globalization is something that cannot be glossed over. One of the most powerful tools of globalization in both the 20th and 21st centuries and even before is no doubt mass communication and mass media. The mass media – the newspapers, periodicals, radio, television and websites – which has the potential to reach large numbers of people at the same time, has facilitated the blurring of distances between time and space the character and structures possessed by the mass media give it the impetus to serve as a platform to engender the phenomenon of globalization. Denis McQuail’s (1969) characterization of the mass media is commonly used today as a general framework for the study of the field. He identified, according to Danesi (2009), the main features of the mass media as:

- They usually require complex formal organization
- They are directed toward large audiences
- They are public and their content is open to everyone
- Audiences are heterogeneous
- The mass media establish simultaneous contact with large number of people who live at a distance from each other.
- The relationship between media personalities and audience members is mediated.
- The audience is part of a mass culture.

Because they are designed to have a wider reach and are ran by complex institutionalized bodies, these giant media outlets which are usually possessed by these advanced economies own majority of these mass media structures in most countries. They, therefore, become tools for propagating some of these Western ideologies and through that make the world one global community by feeding the masses with a similar content.

Croteau and Hoynes (2003) thought of globalization in relation to media as having two central components. The first according to them has to with the fact that, with electronic media especially, instantaneous communication and interaction can be carried out over far distances. The second dimension, they continue, is identified to be the content of this communication. With electronic media, the ideas, images and sounds of different cultures are potentially available to vast networks of people outside the culture from which the message is emanating. In this sense, they contend, culture becomes easily accessible to more people. Croteau and Hoynes (2003) asserted that:

Globalisation is not just about the technological innovations used to communicate over long distances. In addition, and perhaps more importantly, it also refers to the exchange and intermingling of cultures from different parts of the globe. The globalization of

mass media, especially, refers to the content – the cultural products – available globally (p. 340).

It is this intermingling of cultures that end up leading to a situation which could lead to one of the cultures colonizing the other or a total hegemony.

### **Mass Media and the Facilitation of Cultural/Media Imperialism**

The power of the media to influence the cultures of societies negatively has been at the forefront of the modernists' world view a long time ago. Glen Creeber (2009) contended that the events following the First and Second World Wars caused many modernists to perceive industrialization as the enemy of free thought and individuality and thus producing 'an essentially cold and soulless universe.' Many examples abound in discussions of modernism's show of disdain for the media with the most notable of them being The Frankfurt School. These Marxist ideological scholars like to perceive the media as a standardized product of industrialization which frequently connect the American mass culture with mass production.

For these Marxist philosophers, the American mass production feature was evident in all aspects of the mass culture and as such television shows, film, pulp novel, magazine among other things in that category were almost the same. To them, the media products were designed to deceive the masses into oppression by presenting a homogenized and standard culture instead of stimulating the masses.

Mass communication and mass media have proven to be a catalyst in causing cultural/media imperialism the world over. Such phenomenon is not difficult to occur as giant institutions with the requisite resources for commerce and advertising, end up getting whole communities caught up in a frenzy over the products they advertise to their consumers. The aim is not to wade into theoretical discussions about media effects and such lines of thoughts akin to that. However, terminologies like 'McDonaldization', coined by George Ritzer in 'The McDonaldization of Society' (1993) which later came to be expanded by American sociologist Alan Bryman in 'The Disneyization of Society' (2004) gave some indication as to the potency of the media outlets to influence their societies of operation.

Bryman is said to have explained 'McDonaldization' as the process through which the principles of the fast-food restaurant are coming to dominate larger sectors of the American society as well as the rest of the world. Similarly, Bryman compares this to 'Disneyization', which he explains to be a process by which the principles of the Disney theme parks in America are dominating more sectors of the American society as well as the rest of the international community. The term has now come to be associated with the process by which large corporations are taking over more and more sections of the society. Finally, another term that is giving credence to the dominance of the American nation over other nations is the term 'Americanisation.' Looking at the powerful nature of the American media presently, the issue of global media is gradually giving way to a sort of Americanization. The issue is that when someone speaks of Americanization, the image of an invasion of media products "made in America" in the local/national markets immediately comes to mind. But Americanization also refers to the apprehended menace of losing one's cultural identity by "acting American," by adopting from the United States "ways of doing things" – whether in the realms of politics, economics, or social and cultural practices.

Surprisingly, there have been take-overs and domination of not just societies but whole cultures of other nations through the power of mass media. The following identified areas would serve as exemplars to aid this discussion as to the success of America's cultural dominance on other nations

### **The Case of Music**

Music no doubt offers a cornucopia of pleasures to its consumers. It could however be an agent that subtly, through its content, bring about an unanticipated change in its consumers. The story could be the same for all genres of music. With reference to popular music, Theodore W. Adorno (n.d.) asserted that:

... Listening to popular music is manipulated not only by its promoters but, as it were, by the inherent nature of this music itself, into a system of response mechanisms wholly antagonistic to the idea of individuality in a free, liberal society ... This is how popular music divests the listener of his spontaneity and promotes conditional reflexes.

Adorno's (n. d.) assertion feeds into the idea of the power of music riding on the wings of mass media, to detach an individual and by extension a whole society from its culture and indigenous practices and expose them to cultures of others.

Due to the powerful nature of America's economy which has resulted in America having a concentration of giant media conglomerates, the American mass media, which includes its music has penetrated the markets of other countries which has given rise to a form of media and cultural imperialism. According Crouteau and Hoynes (2003), music is one of the easiest media products to sell globally because its language is universal. In the view of these scholars, the globalization of music has resulted, in music from foreign regions being readily available; such that it is easy to hear American music worldwide. Recordings of Madonna can be found in China and other parts of Africa. Jazz and blues can be heard all over the world as well as American rap music. Though a similar case can be made for other nations' songs in America, the presence of American songs, records and videos far outweigh that of any other country. Music is therefore one medium through which America has asserted its culture on other countries.

### **The Case of Television Programmes**

Television as an electronic media has also contributed to the hegemony and domination of cultures around the world by America. American television shows are pervasive and constitute a higher quantum of percentage of the content of most television programming. Dominick (2009) posited that the United States still dominates the international TV programme market. He observes that between 2006 and 2007, the worldwide appeal of American programmes like *CSI*, *Lost*, *Desperate Housewives* and *Grey's Anatomy* helped America to maintain the lead and dominance of the global TV programme market.

America always looks for ways to maintain the monopoly of the world market and by extension, its cultural dominance; as such, as more countries produce their own TV content, many American production companies, especially those that produce game and reality shows, have concentrated on licensing formats of their programmes to overseas producers who turn them into local versions. Dominick (2009) further argues that there are dozens of foreign variations of *Wheel of Fortune*, *Jeopardy*, *Pimp My Ride* and *World Poker Tour*. All these ends up positioning America to dominate other nations which consume these contents while their (American media products) variations are maintained and safeguarded.

An American TV network which is facilitating the rapid spread and entrenching the values of Americans in other nations, thus contributing to cultural imperialism is the Entertainment and Sports Programming Network (ESPN International). Being the biggest provider of sports programme content in the world, the network serves Canada, Asia, Africa, Latin America, The Pacific and the Middle East, reaching about 90 million households and about 140 countries, going with American culture and values. The network broadcasts American sports to the rest of the world, a phenomenon which is making American sports - Basketball, Rugby – popular around the world.

Music Television (MTV), another American giant media house, is an American basic cable and satellite TV channel owned by MTV Networks Music and Logo Group, a unit of Viacom Media Networks division of Viacom. Though the network was set up to air music videos, it later added other programmes like reality shows and television series shows aired across the globe. All these shows for example 'America's Next Model' all carry on their trails American values and ideologies about beauty and other popular cultural artefacts to other countries in the world. For example, because American popular culture values thinness in women, it has become a standard for women in most cultures because the medium of TV has delivered such cultural content to a group of people. Even children are not spared of this Americanisation as two American television networks – Nickelodeon and The Cartoon Network – broadcast children's programmes. These cartoons programmes, to be precise, are creating new values for children of other societies by modelling American behaviour and changing rules of conduct for children who otherwise would have been wholly immersed. This portends a danger as different societies seek to preserve and perpetuate old cultural values and experience. These American media products designed for children are broadcast across spatial boundaries into other cultures.

### **The Case of Television News**

Casey et al. (2002) posited that the development of international production of news in a global market is seen as a form of cultural imperialism, since most of the news productions are done by transnational corporations based in United States and Europe. These media giants are able, via new technologies, to transmit news to every part of the world. According to Dominick (2009), the idea of cultural domination extends to the news area as well. The discussion of news under this sub-heading would be restricted to television news; as the television is one of the most popular electronic mass media globally and access to television in households has increased dramatically since the 1940s. For years, there have been arguments by dominated cultures that the existing flow of news is one way: from the industrialised West to the developing countries. Under such a system, as representatives of these countries argue, news from the third world is scant and what news there is reflects unfavourably on the developing nations. For example, Africa is mostly represented as a continent of civil wars, extremities of penury and famine and epidemics. Most African leaders are represented as corrupt leaders whereas South American nations are projected as being endemic with revolutions and drugs.

With the advent of the internet and other communication technologies like the cable and satellite, most developing countries consume mostly news by Western media giants of which America is at the forefront. Though other Western news channels exist which beam news content all over the world; notably among them being BBC of Great Britain, France 24 of France and Deutche Welle (German Wave) of Germany with their different channels and programmes tailored to suit regional and continental audiences.

However, the classical case of America's news production giant Cable News Network International (CNN) is worth mentioning. CNN has pioneered the recent proliferation of global news, sports and other continents beamed via television globally. CNN reaches millions of hotel rooms and about 170 million homes in Europe, Africa and Asia through numerous cable systems. Having begun in 1990, the media giant company is structured into five networks serving Europe, the Middle East and Africa as one network; North Asia and the Pacific as another; South Asia; Latin America and finally; North America.

### **The Case of Radio**

The efforts of the Western World to dominate and colonize the media of developing nations and thus entrenching its culture on the rest of the world is also evident in one of the branches of electronic mass

media - radio to be specific. A classic example is the Voice of America (VOA), an American radio network. Baran Stanley (2009) estimates that about 100 million listeners tune in to VOA broadcasts in 53 languages a day. He further argues that 20 million people in 23 developing countries tune in to surrogate operations, RFE, RL, Radio Marti and broadcasts in Asia and in Arabic languages. Since its inception, the VOA has committed itself to spreading the domination of America abroad. In the words of Baran (2009),

The VOA's commitment to the spread of American culture is evidenced by the establishment in 1992 of a 24-hour top 40-style service, VOA Europe, and in 1998 of a 24-hour, all-news English-language worldwide radio service characterized by a snappy style reminiscent of domestic commercial stations. In pursuit of this ... the VOA now frequently strikes agreements with local stations in these countries to broadcast its programs over their AM and FM stations, making them accessible to people who listen outside the shortwave band.

This is one of the means through which America dominates the cultures of other nations, especially developing countries and makes the presence of the American culture felt. VOA has a whole FM channel in Accra, the capital of Ghana which broadcasts their programmes. There is the surrogate system of broadcasting in other cities like Cape Coast, also in Ghana, where VOA news is broadcast to the people.

### **The Case of Films**

Film, another medium of mass communication, has also contributed to a hegemonic situation between the cultures of developing countries and that of the developed countries. Though there is no doubt that other Western media houses have used film as a medium to propagate their values and cultures abroad, the dominance of the American film industry over other national movie industries is obvious. Americans have used the medium of the film as a powerful ideological machinery which has what it takes to influence whole communities and nations.

According to Dominick (2009), American films still dominate the box offices of many foreign countries and that in the year 2006, film rentals from foreign countries amounted to more than \$9 billion. He goes on to posit that some American films fare better overseas than they do in the United States. Like McLuhan espoused, all these media technologies end up becoming the messages themselves and as such there is no way any consumer of these products could escape from its effects in terms of the values and cultural items encoded in the content being carried by these media.

The success story of Hollywood Cinema by the turn of the 20th Century helped to entrench America's global dominance in terms of culture and economic hegemony. In fact, American cultural influence is still felt all over the world today.

Though the Hollywood film industry has lost its first position to Bollywood, the cinema industry in Mumbai (Bombay) in India, due to the fact that, as Parry (2011) indicates, more feature films are now produced in Bombay, India than in Hollywood, California and the Nigerian Film Industry, popularly known as Nollywood, comes second in place to Bollywood of India, Hollywood still has a substantial effect and impact on global cinema and its standards and stars are still icons who enjoy global acclaim.

Hollywood's leap to dominance in the 20th Century, especially the golden age, resulted in the industry becoming an iconic and household brand name such that other cinema industries across the globe adopted nicknames modelled on Hollywood inspired names such as the Bollywood of India, Nollywood of Nigeria, Chinawood, the Hengdian World Studio, the largest film studio in China; Pinewood of Buckinghamshire in England and Ghallywood, the film industry in Ghana.

Though it is obvious that other developed countries, especially countries like England, Germany, Italy, France and Russia, had equally successful film industries with the burgeoning of that mass medium, the unique success of Hollywood contributed immensely to the Americanization of the global film industry and further launched and shot America into a leading position, leading to a cultural imperialism as these Hollywood films wherever they went, carried with them American values of capitalism and other traits of their popular culture.

As McLuhan pointed out, these media technologies, wherever they go, end up becoming the message themselves as the content of these technologies are not consumed separately from the content, they end up being part of the message and end up determining what is supposed to prevail in the atmosphere where they find themselves.

Thus, Hollywood has led to America's culture influencing the global world as the most powerful nation with its culture being pervasive everywhere and dominating other cultures and giving rise to a classic case of cultural imperialism.

### **Repercussions of Cultural/Media Imperialism**

Though there have been arguments and debates still on-going as to the effects of cultural/media imperialism and the fact that it is not always the case that audiences are influenced by mass media content and that audiences can interpret mass media texts in their own way to suit their peculiar needs and situations as seen in the early parts of this write-up, regarding the criticism of audience being passive, stringent measures have to be put in place to counter the effects of these cultural hegemony and put in place programmes to promote their own as it could lead to conflict. Dominick (2009) refers to a friction between Canada and America over Canadians' attempt to protect their national heritage.

According to Dominick (2009), because TV signals know no national boundaries and that programmes of one nation can be received effortlessly in another country, it could ferment trouble. He says that shows on ABC, NBC, and CBS are just as popular in Canada as they are in the United States, and they take away audiences from Canadian channels. Fearful of a cultural invasion of American values and potential loss of advertising revenue to these American TV stations, the Canadian government has instituted content regulations that specify the minimum amount of Canadian content that must be broadcast by Canadian TV stations.

These are the measures most nations must adopt in order to safeguard their culture and advertising revenue in all the mass media so as to avoid a situation of a total overhaul of their cultural value systems and traditions. Most especially, developing countries must put in much effort to protect their cultural values and generate enough funds from advertising for the advancement of their developmental agenda.

### **The Future**

With the birth of the internet and new media, what the future holds as far as the subject of cultural/media imperialism is concerned, could be very interesting. Though no one could actually predict what the

future holds, the pace at which the internet and new media is carrying mass communication and mass media could take an alarming dimension.

For instance, the phenomenon of the convergence culture of the media is rapidly complicating matters and could consequently result in far more reaching levels of cultural imperialism. Jenkins (2006) cited by Hills (2006) said that, convergence does not depend on any specific delivery mechanism but it rather represents a movement from medium-specific content to content that flows across multiple media channels, towards the increased interdependence of communication systems, toward multiple ways of accessing media content and towards ever more complex relations of participatory culture.

The convergence platform the internet and new media are offering in the field of mass media, though has positive effects, would deepen the complex issue of cultural imperialism as those with communication devices like the laptop, tablets and smart phones can easily wade into and flow with live streaming videos on YouTube and other websites which would feed the person's mind with cultural artefacts and values of these same powerful economies, America being in the lead, as these global media giants who controlled the old media are the same people controlling the new media technology.

Presently, the World Wide Web provides accessibility to a global media on a magnitude that has never been experienced before. The internet now has provided a platform for achieving globalization of the media. For instance, Dominick (2009) cited some instances as follows. Radio stations in countries like Japan, the Philippines, Hong Kong, Russia and Ghana among other countries are available on the internet. Streaming video from most countries are becoming more available on the web. Media Zone offers live and on-demand video from China, Trinidad and Mongolia. Jump TV has more than 250 channels from 70 countries where as many International and domestic TV networks have web sites with streaming videos. For instance, Multimedia Ghana Ltd., a Ghanaian media house, operates a convergence system with TV, radio and online newspapers.

There is also the availability of all array of newspapers and magazines from all countries on the internet as well. This means that news from one country could be read by people from other countries, thereby blurring the distinctions thereof and fusing cultures together. The problem lays with the cultures being so fused together which could lead to a total annihilation of the cultures of these smaller countries.

When it happens like that instead of a synergy and a symbiotic relationship between the two cultures, there would be imperialism and a possible total wipe out of the old cultures of the smaller economies and this would be spearheaded by America and other developed countries who are presently exercising dominance over other cultures and media set-ups all over the world.

### **Conclusion**

From the above discussions, the 'flow' of content from the American media landscape to the global media platform is amazing and impressive. Though there have been counter arguments and debates to the fact that cultural imperialism is not as serious as it has been projected to be and that audiences have their own ways of reading and consuming these contents. In this case, bringing their own cultural experiences to bear on these contents, the role of mass communication and mass media in facilitating cultural imperialism is enormous.

Through the power of mass media, America and other Western countries have succeeded in imposing their cultures on these media consuming audiences of the developing nations. The film industry, music, radio, television programmes, news and finally the internet, have aided America specially to push and impose their culture on other countries through 'soft power' of the media. This has resulted in a neo-colonialism in the world which is masking itself with the phenomenon of globalization.

Crouteau and Hoynes (2003) contended that there is no denying the profound impact that the American culture has had on other countries. American television (shows and news), films and music are common in most countries across the globe. Even Europe which is known to be a developed continent, American films make up a percentage of 54 to 92 of movies shown in theatres. The majority of music in the global market is in English and these are mostly by American artistes. In Portuguese speaking Brazil, English constitutes about three-quarters of the songs played on the radio whereas in Germany, it is about 80 percent. Finally, almost half of the songs in Japan are in English.

The cultural imperialism theory, in spite of the criticisms and challenges levelled against it, still occupies an important place and plays a vital role in interpreting the relationship between culture and the media in every society. This is due to the simple reason that cultural/media imperialism has created a hegemony which the media of advanced western countries have been able to influence the culture and way of life of Third World countries.

This article has sought to assess the role of mass communication and mass media in cultural/media imperialism in the world with the American case, Americanisation of the cultures of the world as its focus.

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