



PROJECT MUSE®

Internationalizing "International Communication"

Lee, Chin-Chuan

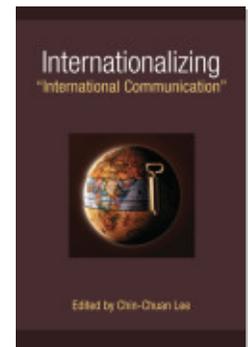
Published by University of Michigan Press

Lee, Chin-Chuan.

Internationalizing "International Communication".

Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014.

Project MUSE., <https://muse.jhu.edu/>.



➔ For additional information about this book

<https://muse.jhu.edu/book/39747>

Access provided at 18 Sep 2019 19:50 GMT with no institutional affiliation



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).

Resurrecting the Imperial Dimension in International Communication

Colin Sparks

The concept of cultural imperialism dominated thinking about international communication in the 1970s and early 1980s. Subsequently, it has been thoroughly discredited and more or less fallen out of mainstream usage. Today, relatively few writers are ready to engage with theoretical issues involved in the concept of imperialism (Louw, 2011). While there are some more or less casual uses of the concept in studies of the media, and it retains a surprisingly vigorous life in other fields, such as linguistics, in most specialist studies it is firmly relegated to a discussion of the history of media and communication theories (Ndlela, 2009). When imperialism is mentioned in discussions of contemporary realities, it is usually in the context of a discussion of its limitations. Kraidy, for example, set his task as “dissecting the deficiencies of the cultural imperialism thesis” (Kraidy, 2005, p. vi). Even those writers who credit it with some lingering importance in that it did identify real disparities in the provision of cultural resources internationally spend much of their time discussing its shortcomings (Morley, 2006).

In part perhaps this is the consequence of more general intellectual and political shifts during the period, but it also reflects a theoretical realignment of the field. Much of the work on international communication in the last two decades has been dominated by theories that stress regional markets, complex flows, and the relative unimportance of the state in international communication. The dominant current of thinking, globalization,

has tended to discount the role of the state in favor of the relations between the global and the local. To the extent that the state has been recognized as a significant factor in cultural exchanges, it is through the lens of “soft power” rather than “imperialism.”

This chapter questions whether it is possible to recover anything valuable from the ruins of the cultural imperialism edifice. In order to do that, it first revisits the classical formulations of the theory and considers some aspects of its defining characteristics. It then reviews some of the main criticisms that were leveled against the theory and which were responsible for its loss of influence. In order to re-establish a workable theory, the underlying concept of imperialism is reconsidered and an alternative account to that prominent during the 1970s and 1980s is offered. Building on this, the scope of a redefined theory is advanced. Finally, reasons are given as to why current international developments mean that the concept is likely to become more pertinent in the coming years.

Cultural Imperialism

Cultural imperialism, as has often been pointed out, is an imprecise category: one of its most severe critics argued that rather than see it as a coherent body of thought, “a better way of thinking about cultural imperialism is to think of it as a variety of different articulations which may have certain features in common, but while may also be in tension with each other, or even mutually contradictory” (Tomlinson, 1991, p. 9). This judgment is certainly correct: many writers with quite different intellectual positions employed the term to a variety of ends. There were, however, “features in common” uniting writers with approaches as diverse as Tunstall, Mattelart, and Smith, notably in their stress upon the importance of the United States of America in world media markets (Mattelart, 1979; Smith, 1980; Tunstall, 1977). Despite this methodological, and indeed political, variety, however, from a theoretical point of view there can be little doubt that the main current was of Marxist inspiration and that it was the work of Herbert Schiller that formed the central reference point for the development and diffusion of the concept (Maxwell, 2003, pp. 38–41). He developed the concept most famously in his *Communication and Cultural Domination* and it is worthwhile repeating the definition of cultural imperialism he gives there:¹

[T]he concept of cultural imperialism today best describes the sum of the processes by which a society is brought into the modern

world system and how its dominating stratum is attracted, pressured, forced and sometimes bribed into shaping social institutions to correspond to, or even promote, the values and structures of the dominating center of the system. (Schiller, 1976, p. 9)

This brief statement contains both the core of the concept and the key to some of its weaknesses. We can identify four distinct elements that have been central to discussions of cultural imperialism:

1. This is a very broad conception of the issues at stake (Lee, 1980, pp. 41–42). Taken literally, it would include all sorts of pressures, for example structural adjustment programs developed by the IMF, which do not naturally fall within the ambit of culture but which certainly involve pressure to shape social institutions to fit the dominating center of the system. This broad concept of cultural imperialism is sometimes contrasted with the much narrower claim of media imperialism, which Oliver Boyd-Barrett defined as “the process whereby the ownership, structure, distribution or content of the media in any one country are singly or together are subject to substantial external pressures from the media interests of any other country or countries without proportionate reciprocation of influence by the country so affected” (Boyd-Barrett, 1977, p. 117). In practice, this distinction has proved hard to sustain. Boyd-Barrett included both of the Schiller texts cited here in his catalogue of scholars working within the scope of media imperialism and Schiller’s own work tended to be highly focused on the international trade in information products, notably television programs (Schiller, 1970).

2. Schiller operates with a core-periphery model of imperialism (Schiller, 1976, p. 14). The system has a center, and it is clear both from the remainder of this text and from Schiller’s other work that this center is the United States. He recognizes that in the past the United States was obliged to struggle with and defeat the earlier imperialist centers of Britain and France, notably in the field of international news but also more generally: “Under the banner of the “Free Flow of Information” U.S. media products came to dominate the world” (Schiller 1976, pp. 24–38). Similarly, Schiller is clearly speaking of a “peripheral” country when he discusses the ways in which a society is “brought into the modern world system.” This conception of imperialism as fundamentally a relationship between the rich, developed world and the poorer, underdeveloped, world was, and is, one of the theoretical and practical foundations of most, if not all, existing theories of cultural imperialism.²

3. Schiller’s account makes two distinct claims: first, the media and cul-

tural apparatuses of the United States, aided by the government, dominate the international trade in media, notably in television programming, which newly established broadcasters in developing countries need in order to fill their schedules while remaining within their budgets; second, that the result of the continual consumption of this U.S.-made material is effective propaganda for the ideas and values of the United States, turning the local elite away from the needs of their own populations and facilitating absorption, or at least collaboration, with U.S. enterprises. These two propositions relate to two different inquiries. The first is concerned with the political economy of the international trade in television programs and the ways in which that dovetailed with the policies of the U.S. state. The second makes a claim about the effect of the consumption of this programming upon its audience in a peripheral country, which can only be answered by an investigation into the realities of watching such material.³

4. A fourth point, not present in the text quoted above but elaborated later in the same book, was the argument for the development of national communication policies. While he operated with a more complex notion of the problems of cultural domination, recognizing that these existed within countries as well as between them, Schiller's stress on national communication policies in practice came to mean the efforts of elites in the developing world to re-negotiate their relationship with the developed world.⁴ If the current arrangements, centered on the free flow of information around the world, were leading to the worldwide domination of U.S. culture at the expense of the national cultures of developing nations, then one way to counter this was to develop national communication policies designed to limit the inflow of alien messages with their damaging effects on the "cultural integrity of weak societies" (Schiller, 1970, p. 109). Just as it was a central part of the industrialization process of countries like the United States to protect infant manufacturing industries until such time as they were sufficiently developed to be internationally competitive, it was necessary to find ways to protect the cultural life of developing nations. This, Schiller thought, could best be achieved through "responsible international regulation of television programming," most likely through policy changes in UNESCO (Schiller, 1970, p. 125).

This overall position inspired an avalanche of books, articles, and reports, both general and scholarly. In addition, it provided a theoretical basis for a protracted campaign, focused on UNESCO, that purported to change the balance of world communication and to foster national communication policies.

Criticisms and Alternatives

The various critiques of cultural imperialism are extremely well known, and there is little need to recount them exhaustively here. It is, nevertheless, worth sketching four of the more important objections since they provide an insight into the some of the issues that any new theory will have to account for:

1. The tendencies toward regional production noted by Boyd-Barrett and Tunstall were identified as important growth points in the world market for media artifacts. In particular, the developing national television industries of Brazil and Mexico, and later of Japan and Korea, were seen as drivers of regional markets based upon cultural proximity (Sinclair, 1999; Straubhaar, 2007). While the world market for some media artifacts—high-budget films, for example—remains dominated by U.S. products, there are many other areas of cultural exchange that have a much more complex structure.

2. The assumption that there was, or could be, a single national culture that could be defended against U.S. values proved untenable. Every existing society, even in the most successful and developed modern states, exhibits a plurality of cultures, very often themselves a combination of earlier influences from “outside.” The “national culture” of every society is the culture of the dominant group and it is one of the mechanisms by which their hegemonic role is consolidated. The United Kingdom provides an obvious example of these tendencies: the national language itself is an accretion of different influences; the diverse population enjoys a variety of different cultures; the norms of “national” culture are unquestionably the norms of the dominant, white, male, metropolitan middle classes. To defend a “national culture” is to defend the position of an elite group, not of a whole people. In some cases, it may be that imported texts articulate suppressed elements of a national culture and allow audiences to celebrate an aspect of their own cultural experience that the broadcasters dominated by the official culture are unable to address (Miller, 1995).

3. The turn toward a conception of the active audience, most markedly in the traditions of cultural studies but also in more empirically oriented research, demonstrated that texts do not have one single reading that will be absorbed by an entire audience either within or across national boundaries (Ang, 1995; Liebes & Katz, 1990). Readings of texts are variable depending upon the cultural resources of their consumers: people watching a U.S. series may absorb U.S. values or they may interpret the same text

in a radically different way. The conditions for the success of an imported program or series depends in part a least on domestic factors, ranging from the established local conventions of broadcasting to scheduling decisions that influence the size of the available audience.

4. The attempt to organize a political struggle around opposition to cultural imperialism took the concrete form of a struggle for a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO). A great deal of effort went into attempting to influence UNESCO, and into building alliances with the representatives of many unsavory despots who were only too happy to curb the media and impose cultural uniformity on their unfortunate subjects. NWICO became embroiled in the Cold War and it went down to defeat along with the Stalinist allies it had accumulated in its attempt to win acceptance (Hamelink, 1997).

One could both amplify and expand this list of objections: taken together, the evidence against the concept of cultural imperialism advanced by Schiller is simply overwhelming. The new orthodoxy in the study of international communication began from the complexity both of media production and of audience behavior. There are many studies documenting the production and circulation of television programs, cinema films, and other artifacts originating far outside the range of Hollywood. Similarly, there are detailed studies of the ways in which audiences, or at least sections of audiences, within the developed world utilize these non-U.S. media artifacts to construct their own cultural frameworks and identities. Underlying this plethora of studies has been one or other variant of theories of globalization, which replace the concept of imperialism as the organizing element in this framework of thought. This is a notoriously protean group of concepts but we can note one central element which is common to many of the variants: it systematically marginalizes the role of the state.

This marginalization is clearly present in the pervasive slogans of “the global and the local,” “glocalization,” “think global, act local,” and so on. The missing term in all of these formulations is precisely the state. Unless the term “local” really means “national,” as indeed it does when one interrogates many of these celebrations of the “local,” then the claim is that the poles of contemporary cultural (or indeed almost any other) life are to be located regionally, and thus “below” the level of the state, and globally “above” the level of the state. Unlike the national, neither the local nor the global are equipped with the full apparatus of state power that coerces and regulates social life, culturally and economically. On the contrary, they are much more the field of the free play of economic competition.

Complexity and freedom become the central organizing categories of studies of international communication. There is no doubt that the work that has taken this as its starting point has illuminated some important dimensions of contemporary media and cultural experience. There clearly are many other centers of production of cultural artifacts than simply the United States, and the international trade in these commodities is undoubtedly much more complex than was previously supposed: both Bollywood (India) and Nollywood (Nigeria) produce more movies each year than does Hollywood, and TV Globo (Brazil) is a major source of television fiction. There clearly are sub-national cultures and media organizations, such as Basque and Catalan broadcasting in the Spanish State and Cantonese-language broadcasting in southern China. It is clearly also the case that different social groups, indeed different individuals, increasingly use the resources of new media to construct diets of media consumption that are independent of the programming policies of any broadcaster—local, national, or global. All of these are good reasons for correcting the emphasis on the role of the state.

Although it is important to correct the overemphasis on the state that marked the concept of cultural imperialism, it does not follow that the state is no longer a significant actor, a position exemplified by Bauman’s claim that in the epoch of globalization “the military, economic and cultural self-sufficiency, indeed self-sustainability, of the state—any state—ceases to be a viable prospect” (Bauman, 1998, p. 64). This view may have exerted a superficial attraction in the period after the fall of communism, when rivalry between states seemed no longer to be a serious prospect in the age of Pax Americana, although even then the claim that the conclusion applies to “any state” seems much too strong. The fragments of the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Somalia, later Afghanistan and a dozen other “failed states” might have been incapable of “self-sustainability,” but surely that term could never have been applied to the United States, or China and India for that matter? Today, should anyone make such a claim it would be immediately rejected as quite incredible.

It is more convincing to argue that there is amongst states what we may call a hierarchy of competences. Some states, pre-eminently the United States, are indeed capable of sustaining themselves in all three of the domains identified by Bauman. Some states, for example the failed states, are clearly not capable of the same sort of self-determination. Others fall between these two poles. Japan, for instance, is economically very powerful and culturally increasingly influential, but politically much weaker. We do

not yet live in a post-Westphalian age, and all but the failed states have, to varying degrees, unique characteristics that mark them off from both the local and the global. Specifically, they have the power to coerce (what Max Weber classically described as a monopoly of the legitimate use of violence), which they can employ both to control their own population and to settle conflicts with other states.

If the critique of the classical formulation of cultural imperialism must lead one to reject it, attempts to construct alternatives that do not begin from the centrality of the state system to an understanding of the contemporary world, and see available resources—economic, political, and cultural—as distributed in a fundamentally and systematically unequal way between these states, have proven equally unsatisfactory.

Imperialism Reconsidered

Settling conflicts with other states has, of course, been one of the main geopolitical features of the last twenty years or so. Under a variety of guises, large, powerful states have used their power, political, economic, and military, to coerce other, weaker, states: Serbia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Georgia, and others have all experienced direct military interventions. These uses of the armed might of the state to achieve its ends has given rise to the vigorous contemporary debates about imperialism, and any attempt to reconsider global patterns of cultural life must begin from a reconsideration of what is meant by imperialism in the present period.

Discussions of imperialism have never been exclusively Marxist in inspiration: writers like John Hobson and Joseph Schumpeter historically, and in the present period Niall Ferguson and Michael Mann, have addressed the issues involved from a variety of intellectual standpoints and political positions (Ferguson, 2003, 2004; Hobson, 1902; Mann, 2003; Schumpeter, 1951). Schiller, and others who developed the concept of cultural imperialism, did however work within a broadly Marxist tradition and that has been, since the early years of the last century, the intellectual current most centrally concerned with developing a theory of imperialism (Callinicos, 2009; Kemp, 1967).

As we saw above, one of the key characteristics of the way in which imperialism was conceived by Schiller and others was in terms of the relations of the “center and periphery,” with the center in question being the United States. This approach still dominates contemporary discussions, most influentially in the work of Panitch and Gindin. They argue that only

the U.S. state is today genuinely imperialist, in that it dominates over the rest of the world state systems, and lesser states are essentially clients of Washington, lacking the capacity for independent action (Panitch & Gindin, 2004).

There is clearly a great deal of evidence to support this view. The United States is by far the largest economy in the world, and it has a military apparatus that is vastly more powerful, and expensive, than any other in the world. As one U.S. commentator put it, “We have a quarter of global GDP (gross domestic product) and 46 per cent of defense spending” (McGregor & Dombey, 2011). Although it seeks allies and supporters for its use of these forces, it is capable, where necessary, of acting independently. By contrast, other large and heavily armed states, like the United Kingdom, have found it impossible to use their armed forces against the will of the United States, at least since the Suez crisis in 1956, and in practice have tended to be a loyal and subservient ally to the United States. In this account, as with earlier versions, the essence of “imperialism” is the domination exerted by large, developed states (the center) over poorer and weaker states (the periphery). This domination, exercised by persuasion, bribery, and coercion, circumscribes the political freedom of developing nations, subordinates their economies to the needs of the center, and helps to ensure that the majority of their people are deprived of the benefits of development. There is, of course, ample evidence that this kind of behavior takes place.

Despite the strength of the evidence, however, there are both theoretical and practical grounds for doubting the validity of this view. In its original formulations, the classical Marxist theory, and indeed contemporaneous formulations by non-Marxists like Schumpeter, focused on conflicts within the developed world. While they were acutely conscious of the ways in which the developed countries dominated and plundered their colonies, they faced the urgent task of explaining why Europe was experiencing the horrors of the First World War. The theory of imperialism was developed to explain how conflicts between imperialist states arose; in other words, they agreed with the liberal Hobson that “the leading characteristic of . . . modern Imperialism [is] the competition of rival Empires” (Hobson 1902, p. 19). This political and military competition, which in that epoch took the form of the annexation of territories and the construction of colonial empires, arose from the increasing scale of capitalist production and of the capitalist firm. As firms came to have a dominant role in their national markets, they more and more faced international competition from capitalists originating in other states, and they increasingly tended to enlist “their”

states in these competitive struggles. As Nikolai Bukharin put it: “When competition has finally reached its highest stage, when it has become competition between state capitalist trusts, then the use of state power, and the possibilities connected with it begin to play a very large part” (Bukharin, 1972, pp. 123–24).⁵ In contemporary versions of this theory, advanced by, among others, Alex Callinicos and David Harvey, it is the existence of a number of competing large, developed, states that is the condition for imperialism (Callinicos, 2009; Harvey, 2005).

Empirically, this seems a better way to account for the history of the last century or so than does the “unipolar” theory of imperialism. The first half of the twentieth century was dominated by a struggle between the British Empire as the incumbent dominant force and the emerging German empire. Out of the mutual exhaustion of the contenders arose a competition between the United States and the Soviet Union which lasted up until 1991. It is true that, throughout this period, the United States was overwhelmingly the more powerful of the competing states, and this was the motor of its ultimate victory, but it nevertheless faced real opposition and military competition from the Soviet bloc. The period after the collapse of the Soviet Union has indeed been one in which the United States has been the unchallenged dominant player but this has been a relatively brief, and atypical, interlude. The relative decline of the United States and the growth of new economic powers are evidence of the ending of this period. Particularly since the 2008 economic crisis, there is certainly evidence that other states are able to follow policies contrary to the wishes of Washington: arguments between the United States and China over currency, between the United States and Germany over the political economy of economic recovery, between the United States and Russia over the war in Georgia, are all cases where other states have demonstrated independence from the desires of the U.S. government. The shift in the balance of world economic power means that these demonstrations of independence, and the international conflicts that they provoke, are likely to become a more marked feature of the coming years: we are returning to a period in which a powerful incumbent is challenged in its international dominance by new and emerging powers. As Secretary of State Hilary Clinton told the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee: “We are in a competition for influence with China; let’s put aside the moral, humanitarian, do-good side of what we believe in, and let’s just talk straight *realpolitik*” and illustrated her point with reference to a contest over rights to natural gas deposits in Papua–New Guinea (Dombey, 2011). More generally, the influential U.S.

magazine *Foreign Affairs* devoted a large section of its March/April 2011 issue to a series of essays grouped under the theme “Will China’s Rise Lead to War?” Charles Glaser opens his contribution with the question “Will China’s ascent increase the probability of a great-power war?” (Glaser, 2011). Fortunately for most of us, he gives an optimistic answer that such an event can be avoided, provided that the United States makes concessions such as surrendering Taiwan to the People’s Republic of China. It is, however, plain that the economic and military development of China, although still immeasurably weaker than the United States, is beginning to pose an increasing challenge to Washington’s domination of world affairs. Inter-imperialist conflict is once again a possibility.

We should, however, be clear as to what inter-imperialist conflict means and what it does not mean. It is certainly true that conflicts between developed states can take the form of military conflict, but there are many other less catastrophic ways in which the power of the state is used in inter-state competition. Trade and currency policy, intellectual property protection, safety and design standards, international economic aid, and so on are all ways in which the state is imbricated in protecting and advancing the economic interests of businesses located within its own border. On the other hand, there are many forms of international economic competition that do not involve significant state intervention, other than the necessary international agreements that must be present to allow lawful trading in the first place. If the term “imperialism” is to have any precise and useful meaning, then it must be used to describe actions of states, rather than what are essentially private economic activities.

The theory of imperialism that emerges from these considerations, and which fits better with the empirical record, thus differs markedly from that which informed writers like Schiller. The driving force in producing imperialism is the conflicts between large-scale capitalist enterprises, allied with “their own” states, seeking to improve their competitive position. Instead of there being one center, there is an array of competing and conflicting states of different sizes and power, in some at least of which there is a co-ordination of political and economic power. The consequences of this competition involve a struggle for control of weaker and less developed countries, partly for reasons that are ultimately economic but also for geo-strategic ones as well.⁶ At the start of the twentieth century, this normally involved formal annexation and the construction of rival colonial empires, but during the last century this has shifted almost entirely to what Harry Magdoff called “imperialism without colonies” (Magdoff, 1972). The sub-

ordination of less developed countries often involves brutal exploitation and military violence, but this is not the defining characteristic of imperialism. It is the struggle between developed countries that is the driving force. Within that framework, certain factors will be properly labeled “imperialist” (in a world war, almost all social activities) but others will represent forms of economic competition conducted more or less independently of the state.

Reframing Cultural Imperialism

This revised theory of imperialism has three immediate consequences for any revision of the concept of cultural imperialism. First, it does not rest upon the notion that there is one center: on the contrary, the condition for the modern form of imperialism is that there is competition between different states. Second, it is this competition between the states of the developed world that is the central axis of imperialism, not the domination of the developed over the developing world. Third, it is important to scrutinize very carefully the evidence of international cultural exchanges to determine whether they are simply economic transactions or if they depend upon the exercise of one form or another of state power: only the latter would properly fall under the heading of imperialism.

Following from the fact that it is international competition that is the motor of imperialism, we would expect to find that international trade is characterized by a multiplicity of sources rather than just one: in other words, the theory of imperialism predicts not a single center but a range of different producers competing in the world market. Cultural production does not map directly onto economic strength, but given that economies of scale are to be expected in the production of cultural goods as much as in any other industry, we would expect to find that the serious competitors are among the larger economies as measured by GDP. The United States is by far the largest economy, ranked first in both Nominal GDP and GDP at Purchasing Power Parities (1/1).⁷ Those countries that are often cited as sources of alternative flows of cultural material are also quite substantial: Japan (3/3); India (4/11); Brazil (7/8); Mexico (11/14); South Korea (12/15). Since the U.S. economy is, on either measure, around three times the size of the Japanese, and between three and ten times the size of India's, the dominance of the United States across a broad spectrum of cultural production is hardly a surprise. Measured over time, however, the position of the United States, for nearly a century to incumbent power both in eco-

nomics and culture, is being eroded and its dominance is being challenged (Tunstall, 2008, pp. 360–412).

The international trade in cultural products is dominated by large producers who have distinct “national” home markets. Their trade is primarily within the developed world, as predicted by the theory of imperialism. According to the most recent figures available at the time of writing, News Corporation, probably the most “global” of the global media corporations, remains very heavily focused on the developed world. In 2009, 94 percent of its revenues came from North America, Australia, and Europe (News Corporation, 2009, p. 95). The same applies to other major media corporations: 90 percent of Viacom’s 2009 earnings came from the United States and Europe (Viacom, 2010, p. 106); 93 percent of the Walt Disney Company’s 2009 revenues came from the United States, Canada, and Europe (Walt Disney Company, 2010, p. 71); for Bertelsmann, 95 percent of 2009 revenues came from Europe and the United States (Bertelsmann, 2009, p. 57); 87 percent of Pearson’s sales were in the United States, Canada, and Europe in 2009 (Pearson plc., 2009, p. 97).

None of these facts mean that the penetration of the media products of the developed world into the developing world does not exist, nor that it does not have important consequences, but it does place them in proportion. The companies cited here, and their peers in Europe and the United States, have dominant positions in their home market and compete vigorously in other markets, primarily in the developed world. These are the conditions that give rise to the modern form of imperialism.

The third issue, the degree to which international cultural exchanges actually constitute cultural imperialism, is much more difficult. There are some forms of cultural exchange that clearly fit almost any definition of cultural imperialism: the Voice of America, the BBC World Service, the British Council, and so on, are evidently organizations funded by imperialist states with the specific aim of promoting the ideas, beliefs, and values of their home country. On the other hand, there are many cultural exchanges that do not properly fit into any notion of imperialism: the international sale of a format by a production company is a more or less straightforward example of a trading relationship that does not presuppose state intervention any more than would the sale of the television set upon which the final version of the program will be viewed. In between such extremes lies a variety of cases that require concrete analysis in order to classify them accurately. In making such a classification, seven important points need to be borne in mind:

1. Neither the concept of imperialism nor the concept of cultural impe-

rialism supposes any consciously aggressive policy on the part of any state or any conspiratorial alliance between top-hatted capitalists and bowler-hatted civil servants. The conflicts that can and do arise originate in the “normal” economic competition between rival capitalist companies and they become imperialist conflicts to the extent that states are drawn into resolving them. States can claim, perhaps sometimes with justification, that their policies are aimed at a “peaceful rise” or at spreading “freedom and democracy,” but they can still find that pursuing these ends brings them into conflict with other states.

2. Cultural imperialism can be both offensive and defensive. Discussion has usually turned on the offensive aspects of the phenomenon, for example the drive to negotiate treaties opening audio-visual markets to free trade. There are, however, equally clear examples of the use of state power to prevent foreign entrance into cultural production: the United States, for example, prevents the control of U.S. television stations by foreign nationals by barring them from owning more than 25 percent of the shares. Similarly, the European Union insists on quotas of European production for broadcasters of general channels in the EU.

3. If, as is argued here, imperialism refers to the recruitment of the state to intervene in international relations primarily in order to facilitate economic development, then there must be the demonstrable presence of state action in any international cultural exchange for it to qualify as cultural imperialism.

4. It follows from this that the “imperialist” dimension of cultural imperialism is determined by the presence of state action, not by the nature of the cultural artifact in question. It is not the intrinsic characteristics of a television program, or a language, that make it “imperialist” but the use to state power to ensure that it gains currency. The media are not in themselves “imperialist” even when the conditions specified by Boyd-Barrett actually apply, as for example they have done, historically, in Ireland (Corcoran, 2004, pp. 15–16). There is a long history of British cultural imperialism in Ireland, but the spillover of U.K. signals into the Republic is not part of it.

5. It is essential to distinguish between what may properly be termed “cultural imperialism,” which may be briefly defined as the use of state power in the international cultural sphere and the fact that some cultural exchanges are closely connected with imperialism. The international status of the English language is a good example of this. English is not, in itself, an “imperialist” language. Its spread in a number of areas, Ireland most obviously, was indeed closely associated with imperialist policies, but its

contemporary global reach is a product of the fact that for the last two centuries the world's dominant imperialist power has been predominantly English speaking: first the United Kingdom, then the United States. The presence of English in India is not due to the characteristics of the language but to the fact of the long British imperial rule in India: it is not itself cultural imperialism, but rather one of the cultural consequences of imperialism.

6. It is not a necessary condition for cultural imperialism, or for the cultural consequences of imperialism, that they have a particular kind of impact upon their audiences. In some cases, cultural forms that evidently originate in imperial centers are enthusiastically adopted by the population of subject territories: the sport of cricket in India, where it commands a far more central place in the dominant culture than it does in its English place of origin, is an obvious example, and the control of the sport, once located in London, today lies in India. In other cases, cultural phenomena might have quite different meanings in different places, being popular in one and not another, or being reworked into hybrid forms, and so on. The extent and nature of the impact of any cultural phenomenon is a matter for empirical investigation and is independent of the question as to whether that phenomenon occurs as the result of state action or through simple economic exchange. The consequences that earlier theories of cultural imperialism assumed as being intrinsic to the nature of the trade in cultural products are in practice only one possible set of outcomes among many.

7. Not only is the assertion as to the existence of homogeneous "national cultures" extremely difficult to sustain empirically but the theory of cultural imperialism has no place for such a concept, given that most Marxist-inspired theories of the modern state system see it as the result of historical struggle between different class interests rather than as the natural expression of a people. There is no reason to suppose that either the agents (large capitalist corporations and powerful modern states) or the objects of cultural imperialism (states and societies endowed with less economic, political, and military power) are ethnically or culturally homogeneous. There are dominant and subordinate cultures within both the imperialist states and those states that experience their attentions.

Consequences

The first result of applying the above criteria is that it is possible to advance a viable and coherent concept of cultural imperialism that is not subject to

the kinds of criticisms that were applied to Schiller's version. It once again becomes a viable project to investigate the ways in which state power and cultural power are intertwined in the production and circulation of cultural artifacts. The second consequence is that the term "cultural imperialism" will be used in a narrower set of circumstances than was the case in the past, although the category of the cultural consequences of imperialism is likely to be quite large.

We can illuminate what this means by considering some of the issues that were at the center of contention during the ascendancy of the concept in the 1970s and 1980s. As we noted above, whatever the motives of many of the participants, the struggle over the New World Communication and Information Order was caught up in the inter-imperialist rivalries between the United States and the Soviet Union. Some of the items of contention, for example the close and open alliance between the U.S. State Department and the Motion Picture Association of America in ensuring that trade treaties guaranteed free access to national audio-visual markets, clearly fall within our revised category of cultural imperialism. Others, for example the character of the reporting of Africa, fit better into the category of the cultural consequences of imperialism, both in terms of the social terrain that was being reported and many of the assumptions upon which reporting was (and too often still is) based.

In the future, these concepts will come to have ever greater relevance. Direct economic rivalry between the U.S. incumbent and a new challenger is an obvious feature of the contemporary world, and we saw above how the U.S. secretary of state has begun to formulate that rivalry in terms of strategic conflicts. As China, and other new economic powers such as India, grow stronger so we will see increasing competition and conflict between them and with the Western powers that have dominated the world for two centuries. The analogous situation is with the established and apparently "natural" domination of the British Empire experiencing challenges from Germany at the end of the nineteenth century, and later from the United States and the Soviet Union. Our concern is with the media, not with the general geopolitics of the contemporary world, so we do not have to speculate as to whether this rivalry will have the same consequences as the earlier conflicts: we can simply express the fervent hope that the outcomes this time will be different and much less horrifying.

In media terms, however, we can anticipate at least six possible ways in which these more general economic and political changes will lead to debates and conflicts:

1. Direct rivalry between states in terms of their propaganda efforts. One of the major developments of the last decade or so has been the proliferation of state-backed international broadcasters, who now pose a challenge to the incumbent international broadcasters, both state and private. To quote Hillary Clinton again, on the Middle East: “We [the United States] are in an information war, and we are losing that war. . . . Al-Jazeera is winning” (Dombey, 2011). In the future, that challenge is likely to widen: China, for example, has recently substantially increased the resources of the former CCTV9 and renamed it CCTV News, while at the same time funding Xinhua to establish a new international news channel. We should recall that such channels do not need to command a mass audience to have a powerful influence on public perceptions. Al Jazeera is an exception in that it commands a fairly wide audience across the Arab world but CNN and the BBC have tiny audiences most of the time in most places. The attention of a small elite audience can be as much a bone of contention as a mass audience.

2. Conflicts over the nature of news and journalism. These state broadcasters are already engaged in a struggle over what constitutes “news” that rests on deeply embedded assumptions in the news cultures of the different countries. Many U.S. journalists, news organizations, and media scholars have a developed and self-conscious sense of the norms of professional conduct. These views are strongly held and frequently expressed, despite the fact that reality sometimes does not correspond to ideology. These views are not in practice shared by journalists formed in other traditions and one only needs to recall the disputes over the coverage of Tibet in 2008 to see that these differences can be expressed by news workers, scholars, and even large numbers of ordinary people.

3. Conflicts over the regulation of international media flows. The protection of cultural industries has been a theme of international trade negotiations since at least the 1947 treaty establishing the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), whose Article IV (d) permitted the retention of screen quotas for cinematic films. The original treaty stated that “screen quotas shall be subject to negotiation for their limitation, liberalization or elimination,” but cultural protectionism derived from this article continue to this day (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, 1947). The continuing efforts by states to protect the creative industries operating within their territory lead regularly to public altercations. Historically, the pressure to open markets and allow free trade, in general as much as in the creative industries, has come from the most powerful players. As the

locus of economic power shifts, so the offensive and defensive postures will be exchanged. Yesterday's fervent protectionist becomes tomorrow's free trader, and vice versa. We can already see some slight evidence of such reversals in the problems Al Jazeera experienced in getting carriage on U.S. cable channels. The issue of who can own channels and stations is likely to intensify as the balance of economic power shifts.

4. Conflicts over the control of the Internet. The distribution of power in the governance of the Internet reflects the old international order. For example, at the time of writing, the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) Board of Directors contains 21 people, one of whom is Chinese (and he is from Taiwan) and two Indians (one of whom has long lived in the United States) (ICANN, 2011). The subcommittee that oversees the root servers reported to the U.S. National Telecommunications and Information Administration's Office of Spectrum Management. As the number of users, and the commercial forces involved, shift towards Asia, so there will be disputes over where decisions are taken, and the composition of the bodies that take them. The World Summit on the Information Society process already illustrated the ways in which such disputes link economic and political forces.

5. Conflicts over the protection of intellectual property. Issues over the widespread copying of computer programs, film and video programs and formats, and music are already well known. Paradoxically, perhaps, this is one area where we might expect to find a decrease in the level of conflict as the economic balance shifts. The ambition of large broadcasters in Asia to become exporters of content, for example, is already changing their attitude toward formats. Instead of the murky processes that led from *Pop Idol* through *American Idol* to *Super Girl*, there have more recently been formal purchases of rights and the signing of co-production agreements.

6. Conflicts over the nature of popular culture. International conflicts find expression in popular cultural artifacts. One need only think of Hollywood representations of Japanese, Russians, and Communists to see how international struggles can map quite closely onto ideologies and this is likely to continue in the future. At the same time, shifting economic power results in the popularization of cultural forms with a different national origin: the shift from cricket to basketball in the Caribbean is one well-known example. A similar shift can be traced in the visual styles of animation following the economic development of Japan, which seems likely to continue in the burgeoning Chinese industry. So, too, the sites and content of popular culture change: there is a considerable distance between an evening

spent in a western bar or pub and an evening of Chinese KTV (karaoke television).

Some of these issues are already evident in the contemporary media while others are certain to become important in the next decade. Cataloguing such changes empirically can be performed within any theoretical framework or none at all. If we wish to analyze and explain them, however, then an appropriate theoretical account is essential. The issues all have a simple economic dimension, but they are also, to a greater or lesser extent, also involved in the actions of states, and an adequate theory must be able to account for both of these. It is for this reason that imperialism, cultural imperialism, and the cultural consequences of imperialism are once again an essential part of the theoretical framework for the study of international communication.

REFERENCES

- Ang, I. (1995). *Watching Dallas: Soap opera and the melodramatic imagination*. London: Methuen.
- Bauman, Z. (1998). *Globlization: The human consequences*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bertelsmann. (2009). *Annual report*. Gütersloh: Bertelsmann.
- Boyd-Barrett, O. (1977). Media imperialism: Towards an international framework for the analysis of media systems. In J. Curran, M. Gurevitch, & J. Woollacott, eds., *Mass communication and society* (pp. 116–35). London: Edward Arnold.
- Bukharin, N. (1972). *Imperialism and world economy*. London: Merlin.
- Callinicos, A. (2009). *Imperialism and global political economy*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Corcoran, F. (2004). *RTÉ and the globalization of Irish television*. Bristol, UK: Intellect.
- Dombey, D. (2011). US struggling to hold role as global leader, Clinton says. *Financial Times*, 2 March. Retrieved 7 March 2011, from <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/5ff5669c-4508-11e0-80e7-00144feab49a.html#axzz1FCm5vqgK>.
- Ferguson, N. (2003). *Empire: How Britain made the modern world*. London: Allen Lane.
- Ferguson, N. (2004). *Colossus: The rise and fall of the American empire*. London: Allen Lane.
- Frank, A. G. (1967). *Capitalism and underdevelopment in Latin America: Historical studies of Chile and Brazil*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Galtung, J. (1971). A structural theory of imperialism. *Journal of Peace Research* 8 (2): 81–117.
- General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). (1947). *WTO legal texts*. 30 October. Retrieved 27 April 2011, from http://www.wto.org/english/docs_e/legal_e/gatt47_01_e.htm.
- Glaser, C. (2011). Will China's rise lead to war: Why realism does not mean pessimism. *Foreign Affairs* 90 (2): 80–91.

- Hamelink, C. (1997). World communications: business as usual? In M. Baillie & D. Winseck, eds., *Democratising communication? Comparative perspectives in information and power* (pp. 407–25). Cresskill, NJ: Hampton.
- Hardt, M., & Negri, A. (2000). *Empire*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Harvey, D. (2005). *The new imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hobson, J. (1902). *Imperialism: A study*. London: George Allen and Unwin.
- International Monetary Fund. (2010). World economic outlook database. October. Retrieved 14 February 2011, from <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2010/02/weodata/index.aspx>.
- Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN). (2011). *Board of directors*. Retrieved 29 April 2011, from <http://www.icann.org/en/general/board.html>.
- Kemp, T. (1967). *Theories of imperialism*. London: Dennis Dobson.
- Kraidy, M. (2005). *Hybridity, or the cultural logic of globalization*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Lee, C.-C. (1980). *Media imperialism reconsidered*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Liebes, T., & Katz, E. (1990). *The export of meaning: Cross-cultural readings of Dallas*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Louw, P. E. (2011). Revisiting cultural imperialism. In H. Wasserman, ed., *Popular media, democracy and development in Africa* (pp. 32–45). Abingdon: Routledge.
- Magdoff, H. (1972). Imperialism without colonies. In R. Owen & B. Sutcliffe, eds., *Studies in the theory of imperialism* (pp. 144–70). London: Longman.
- Mann, M. (2003). *Incoherent empire*. London: Verso.
- Mattelart, A. (1979). *Multinational corporations and the control of culture: The ideological apparatuses of imperialism*. Brighton, UK: Harvester.
- Maxwell, R. (2003). *Herbert Schiller*. Lanham, MA: Rowman & Littlefield.
- McGregor, R., & Dombey, D. (2011). Defense: a question of scale. *Financial Times*, 6 March. <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/695f48d8-4823-11e0-b323-00144fe-ab49a.html#axzz1FvhvUx4v>.
- Miller, D. (1995). The consumption of soap operas: “The young and the restless” and mass consumption in Trinidad. In R. Allen, ed., *To be continued . . . soap operas around the world* (pp. 213–33). London: Routledge.
- Morley, D. (2006). Globalisation and cultural imperialism reconsidered: Old questions in new guises. In J. Curran & D. Morley, eds., *Media and cultural theory* (pp. 30–43). London: Routledge.
- Ndlela, N. (2009). African media research in the era of globalization. *Journal of African Media Studies* 1 (1): 55–68.
- News Corporation. (2009). *Annual report*. New York: News Corporation.
- Panitch, L., & Gindin, S. (2004). *Global capitalism and American empire*. London: Merlin Press.
- Pearson plc. (2009). *Report and accounts*. London: Pearson.
- Rothkopf, D. (1997). In praise of cultural imperialism? *Foreign Policy* 107:38–53.
- Schiller, H. (1970). *Mass communications and American empire*. New York: Augustus M. Kelley.
- Schiller, H. (1976). *Communication and cultural domination*. White Plains, NY: M. E. Sharpe.

- Schumpeter, J. (1951). *Imperialism and social classes*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Sinclair, J. (1999). *Latin American television: A global view*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Smith, A. (1980). *The Geopolitics of information: How Western culture dominates the world*. London: Faber.
- Straubhaar, J. (2007). *World television: From global to local*. London: Sage.
- Tomlinson, J. (1991). *Cultural imperialism*. London: Pinter.
- Tunstall, J. (1977). *The media are American: Anglo-American media in the world*. London: Constable.
- Tunstall, J. (2008). *The media were American: US mass media in decline*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Viacom. (2010). *Transition report pursuant to Section 13 or 15 (d) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934*. New York: Viacom.
- Walt Disney Company. 2010. *Annual reports pursuant to Section 13 or 15(d) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934*. Burbank, CA: Walt Disney Company.

NOTES

1. Schiller was, of course, a consistent critic of imperialism, both in general and in its specific cultural form, but it is possible to find positive accounts of cultural imperialism to place alongside celebratory theories of imperialism such as Niall Ferguson's: "It is in the general interest of the United States to encourage the development of a world in which the fault lines separating nations are bridged by shared interests. And it is in the economic and political interests of the United States to ensure that if the world is moving toward a common language, it be English; that if the world is moving toward common telecommunications, safety, and quality standards, they be American; that if the world is becoming linked by television, radio, and music, the programming be American; and that if common values are being developed, they be values with which Americans are comfortable" (Rothkopf, 1997, p. 45).

2. This conception, sometimes using the terms "metropolis" and "satellite," has been extremely influential in a wide range of fields (Frank, 1967). Galtung, in a famous article, wrote: "Imperialism is a relation between a Center and a Periphery nation so that: (1) there is harmony of interest between the center in the Center nation and the center in the Periphery nation, (2) there is more disharmony of interest within the Periphery nation than within the Center nations, (3) there is disharmony of interest between the periphery in the Center nation and the periphery in the Periphery nation" (Galtung, 1971, p. 83).

3. It is worth noting that Schiller operated with a model of effects very similar to that of Wilbur Schramm and other development scholars (Schiller, 1970, pp. 109–15).

4. It is worth noting, however, that the charge of assuming a uniform international media market often laid against proponents of cultural imperialism cannot be sustained. Boyd-Barrett, for example, recognized the existence of regional markets for news and media as a potential challenge to the dominance of the core (Boyd-Barrett, 1977, p. 134).

5. This state-centered approach differs radically from that of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, who argue that contemporary capitalism has outgrown the state system and therefore there is no longer any basis for the geopolitical conflicts that so marked the twentieth century. The conflicts of imperialism have been replaced by the conflict between “Empire” and “Multitude.” As they put it: “The distinct national colors of the imperialist map of the world have merged and blended in the imperial global rainbow” (Hardt & Negri, 2000, p. xiii). In essence, this is a theory of globalization rather than imperialism.

6. So the British Empire seized Gibraltar, Malta, Cyprus, Aden, and Singapore not to exploit the denizens, loot raw materials, or export capital, but for the obvious military advantages they presented.

7. Gross Domestic Product can be measured in several ways. The most common measure is Nominal GDP in U.S. dollars, but an alternative is GDP at Purchasing Power Parities (PPPs). There is no obvious reason for preferring either measure, although in terms of the amount of human effort that is expended in cultural production the PPP measures seem more likely to give a better picture of national capacity. Both measures are provided by the International Monetary Fund, and the rankings here are based on their figures for 2010. The first number is the country’s place in the ranking of GDP at PPPs, the second that in the ranking of Nominal GDP (“World Economic Outlook Database,” 2010).