Conceptual analysis of media imperialism

Dr. Madhudeep Singh, Meenakshi

1Assistant Professor, IMC&MT
Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra.

2Research Scholar, IMC&MT
Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra.

Abstract
Media imperialism is a theory, stating that smaller countries are losing their identity due to the force-feeding of media from larger nations. The western world by using different types of media, among them the most effective and impactful is television transmitting the western values and beliefs to the other countries and cultures around the world. Media has changed the way we work, live, do business, and even our views and perception towards life. Present paper discusses the origin, concept, emergence of media imperialism and about its different aspects. It also discusses the dependency model of communication, media imperialism and culture, which examine the power and effect of western media, especially US media. Furthermore, paper examines the global media expansion, global media organization and the policy of localization adopted by these organizations to survive in the countries outside their home market. This paper also very briefly discusses the media imperialism in Indian perspective.

Keywords: Media Imperialism, Cultural Imperialism, Dependency Model, Media Conglomerates

1 Introduction
The term Media Imperialism is new in itself. This term was first used by Oliver Boyd-Barett in 1977. The word “Media Imperialism” is combination of two words ‘media’ and ‘imperialism’. Media means; the channels which human being use to get information, education and entertainment which include newspapers, magazine, radio, television and internet. The word imperialism used in context of domination of one powerful and well developed country on the other country which in comparison have not used as well as develop their resources to that extend. On the basis of above mentioned we can say that media imperialism is the domination of one fully media equipped and developed country on other country which is less equipped or has no availability of media. This domination is related to the exportation of foreign programs especially for TV which is considered as a most powerful medium among all the Media. Some other terms, "Structural Imperialism", "Cultural Dependency and Domination", "Cultural Synchronization", “Electronic Colonialism", "Ideological Imperialism", and "Economic Imperialism" are used to describe the same basic notion of cultural imperialism through which media imperialism has its origin because it is believed that culture in itself has an enforced medium in formation of ideas, attitudes, values and beliefs. Media is considered very powerful medium which influences the culture with pre-decided goals and objectives.
Media imperialism is usually discussed with reference to the broader theory of cultural imperialism. The term cultural imperialism is popularized by Jeremy Tunstall who describes a situation in which “authentic traditional, local culture is being battered out of existence by the indiscriminate dumping of large quantities of slick commercial and media products from the US (The Media are American: Anglo-American Media in the World, 1977: p 57).

2 Theoretical Background of Media Imperialism

The issue of media imperialism grab the attention of people worldwide during seventies, when the third world countries (developing and underdeveloped nations) complained about the uni-directional flow of information which was dominated by the developed or first world countries. ‘Cultural imperialism’ which is more inclusive term than media imperialism, includes the effect of international media, education and cultural systems (Golding 1983) which calls for NWICO. The site for this conflict was UNESCO where the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) movement developed, supported by the McBride report, "Many Voices, One World". Countries such as India, Indonesia, and Egypt argued that the large media companies should have limited access to developing countries. At global level, media imperialism recommends the promotion of ‘cultural identity of every society’ that is necessary to enable it to enjoy a harmonious and creative inter-relationship with other cultures (McBride 1980).

Later during 1980s and 1990s, as multinational media conglomerates grow larger and more powerful, media critics started to believe that it will become increasingly difficult for small, local media outlets to survive. American media critic Herbert Schiller wrote, "The concept of cultural imperialism today [1975] best describes the sum of the processes by which a society is brought into the modern world system and how it is 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 centre of the system. The public media are the foremost example of operating enterprises that are used in the penetrative process. For penetration on a significant scale the media themselves must be captured by the dominated penetrating power. This occurs largely through the commercialization of broadcasting" and the powerful U.S communication industry forced global commercialization of the international communication system. He identified the dominance of the U.S and a few European nations in the global flow of media products as an integral part of western imperialism.

Critics of western imperialism claim that the trend is now media imperialism with western content, style and form dominates the rest of the world. We also see the rise of new media capitals in Asia which are shifting the balance of the global entertainment industry from Hollywood to newer centers in the region. India, South Korea and China are beginning to re-order global flows of information. According to Hamish McRae there are three major reasons for media imperialism first, multinationals want to increase sales, profits and shareholder value and globalization provides that opportunity. Second is a barrier to international business are lower and falling - it is much easier to expand into new territories. Third one is governments want to encourage domestic businesses to expand overseas.
3 Media Imperialism and Culture

Western civilization produces the majority of the media. The rest of the world purchases those productions because it is cheaper for them to do so rather than produce their own. Therefore, third world countries are watching media filled with the western world’s way of living, believing and thinking. People of third world cultures then start to want and do the same things in their countries and destroy their own culture. Thomas Guback argued (1984), the powerful U.S communication industry, including films and television as well as news, exerts influence, sometimes quite considerable, over the cultural life of other nations. These scholars defined the international exchange of television programs and motion pictures as one way flow from the prosperous nations of the west to the countries of the third world or from U.S. to rest of the world. As the larger media corporations begin to take over, smaller media companies are losing their identity.

According to Schiller, the system of colonization has been replaced by domination of certain power centers, their organizations and control over the modern world system. Together with Herbert Schiller there were few researchers who took up the issue of the international news flow in various. Schiller’s early work spoke about dependency model, a Marxist approach to analyze the international flow and imbalance emanating from it. His dependency theories stated that imperial powers of the West would like to have economic centers in their own country, and control all the economic activities in the periphery through the modern instruments of mass communication.

Fejas (1981) said that “media imperialism shall be used in a broader and general manner to describe the process by which modern communication media have operated to create, maintain and expand system of domination and dependency on world scale”. The terms dominations and dependency are directly drawn from the theoretical interventions of neo-Marxists who sought to think globally and critically. The dependency model vis-à-vis the relationship between developed and developing countries, and developmental goals of developing nations: ‘dependency model’s major conclusion is that the third world countries occupy a subordinate position in the international economic and political which are seen as being structured primarily according to the needs of the developed countries.

Oliveira (1986) conducted a survey in the Central American nation of Belize. People in Northern Belize, where television production is non-existent, are able to watch television shows produced in the United States and Mexico. From his interviews regarding television viewing habits (predominantly Mexican or American shows), and product preferences, he found that people who watched more US shows preferred more of US products and less of those produced in Central America. On the other hand, people who watched more Mexican shows preferred Central American products over those produced in the United States. The study revolves around and the best example of the dependency model of communication.

According to UNSECO, the 75% programs shown in the third world countries are imported. Another report by International Foundation for Development Alternatives (IFDA) has emphasized the centralizing potential of modern communication technology in that it not only gives tremendous power to those who control it but also empowers them to influence and shape people’s images of their fellowmen and women and of the world around them. It has given the access to knowledge towards cultivation of and fulfillment.

Dr. Madhudeep Singh, Meenakshi - Conceptual analysis of media imperialism

www.ijifr.com Email: ijifr.journal@gmail.com © IJIFR 2013
to their aspiration to a better life. The first and most influential interpretation of an event tend to determine our opinion forming. Agence France Press, Associated Press and Reuters, three major world news agencies, have for reasons of resources, organization and distribution “a quasi-monopoly in providing prime definitions of breaking news in the world periphery” (V. Ginneken 1998). In electronic media CNN is carrying on the job, it has “power to mould the international public opinion. Its version of world events is likely to define the worldwide of millions of viewers around the globe” (Thuss, 2000). Global economic system, an information outpour, and media monopoly is the driving force behind the new world order. Ironically, absent from all this are democratic values, human rights, rationalization of consumption, respect and care for the environment and equality among nations (Osama El Sharif).

4 Global Media Expansion that has changed the Face of Media

4.1 Global Media Organization
The process of media imperialism is incomplete without describing about big media conglomerates or the organizations, which actually for the sake of their business and for the profits making, speeden up the process of media imperialism or at least help whether knowingly or unknowingly. When these big media conglomerates went to other countries they usually adopt the policy of localization which means they adopt the local taste and culture according to the local audience to survive, to earn the profits and to establish themselves in the respective countries. According to Farooq Suleria these channels and programs are local in appearance but western when it comes to profit making.

Boyd-Barrett (1977) observes that transnational media influence is not restricted to content but extends to such things as media policies, practices, and the shape of media systems. Since the advent of liberalization, and in response to opportunities created by the collapse of communism and one-party states, more governments have imported the American programs; this has accelerated a global trend of media privatization and commercialization. Deregulation has played an essential role in boosting media imperialism from countries with power over countries with less power.

Table 1: Top six media companies of 2010 (Revenue in billion dollars)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Revenue (billion dollars)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comcast/NBS</td>
<td>41.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universal(USA)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walt Disney(USA)</td>
<td>28.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News Crop(USA)</td>
<td>24.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viacom(USA)</td>
<td>20.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Warner(USA)</td>
<td>20.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sony(Japan)</td>
<td>16.09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Statista IFM 2010

On June 26, 1993 Murdoch’s news corporation buy the STAR TV satellite (64%) from Hong-Kong based Li-Ka Shing for $525million and reached to the 70% population of world from Japan to Middle East. As the other conglomerates extend their activities to more countries, the production of culture and information takes on a cosmopolitan hue and suggest emergence of global culture. In simple word media
imperialism means that world communication market is expanding day by day and affecting more and more local culture the big houses have outgrown their saturated home market and the only way left for them is to business outside country. Today media has grown into a big business. Costs in newsgathering and dissemination are increasing every day and this is happening with the growth of media conglomerates because of whom small and marginal units are out of business.

Sushma Gandhi in her book “Media Imperialism” said that “As a consequence of communication revolution, the new global communication technology with the electronic media as the nervous system has the far reaching potential in shaping every aspect of our lives. Media expansion is the key factors in the evolving global system. In the international market information production, distribution, storing and retrieval are big business. The sector probably has the single most impact on international transactions in terms of their fiscal and socio-cultural dimensions”.

Pakistani media analyst GPSM Hali lists a number of ‘techniques' used by conglomerate media to control their audience, among them: repetition of lies, opinions as fact, half-truths, misleading headlines, biased photographs, censorship, wrongful attribution and of course yellow journalism which is after all a western invention capitalist societies are ruled by economic and commercial interests. In such societies the power of media is used to influence and even distort the psyche of the people to make them consumption oriented. The conglomerates in turn are serving the interest of corporate through their effective hold over the media. They aim to turn the third world countries into dumping grounds for those products that are banned or restricted in the West. Common examples are pesticides, cigarettes and injurious pharmaceutical products. This state of affairs persists particularly in the developed nations including USA where 80% of the media is controlled by few media conglomerates with massive media empires. Some of the famous media moguls are CNN/TIME WARNER BROS, Graham of Newsweek, Westing House which also owns NBC; Twentieth Century Fox which also owns Sony; Rupert Murdoch of Australia, who is whiz word in US media; Kerry Packer of Channel 9 who owns 109 magazines.

Straubhaar argues that television’s flow and impact need to be looked at not only the global level, but also at regional or geo-linguistic, national, sub-national or even local levels. At the global level, some television channels take same content to worldwide audience such as CNN, whereas others are creating more regionally or locally adopted versions of CNN programs. There are minimalist approaches such as cartoon channels dubbing its programs in Hindi for Indian audience, and STAR TV broadcasting Hindi programs. “Many local audiences would like to see programming in their own languages, address their own cultures”. If the local language is shared by geo-linguistic group, the programming may be imported to other region, adding to the regionalization of television program that flows along language boundaries. Satrubbhar says there is ‘a subtle interplay between the global and local in television form and content. Television programs are spreading the message of materialism and consumerism in local languages and moderating its message to local needs and culture.
Towards Localization

In developing countries like India, the cross-border channels began changing their strategy to reach audiences beyond a small urban elite population which watched their foreign-originated English programs. STAR was the first to start adding Hindi sub-titles to Hollywood films (Thuss 2000). In 1996 STAR Plus began telecasting locally-produced programs in Hindi and English. Thuss noted that STAR TV network boasted a policy of localization, but he also argues that ‘this change of heart was not because of any respect for Indian languages or culture on the part of huge media conglomerates but the sheer logic of market pressure- localizing the product to reach a wider consumer base and increase advertising revenue’(Thuss2000). It clearly indicates that to enter in the living rooms of audience localizing of programs is the only way. Big media conglomerates like Li ka Shing, Ted Turner, Disney are buying the shares of local companies and slowly turning them the channels which are the carbon copy of their origin country with the exportation and adaption of foreign programs.

In the past years global operators have understood that adaptations to local taste make their exploit even more successful. The performance of music station, MTV, on the Asian markets is a good case in point. In order to accommodate with local taste some 20% of MTV programming is Asian. This includes the promotion of Thai and Chinese pop star. MTV’s products may be regionally customized, but its prime orientation remains to offer advertisers a profitable market for consumer products and to lure consumers, particularly young ones, to watch its programs and in the process influence their taste, life style and moral values (Sushma Gandhi).

In 2002, Hong Kong based Blaise D’Sylva, CEO, Greater China and North Asia for Starcom Media Vest, said the American and European media owners would increasingly have to publish more editions or sections in local languages when marketing their publications in Asia if they want to grow their audience and revenue. Osakue Stevenson Omoera and Elo Ibagerein 2010 did a study in Nigeria regarding the media imperialism which drawn the conclusion that 70 % content of Nigerian television was found foreign and 60%local programs are religious programs that are relayed for the name of local content. In India UTV is contracted by Disney since 1996 to dub its programs in Hindi and last year Disney spends 38$million to buy UTV shares so that Disney through UTV can operate its business in India with direct presence and control. As French and Richards say,” recent evidence from national and local television practices in many Asian countries points to the importance of local programming, ethnic and cultural differentiation, and the use of local languages and dialect in influencing program preference‘(2000). India and China are largest markets in the world.

It is not the global structure that plays the important role in people’s lives, but it is the local context that shapes people’s everyday lives. By the act of interpretation, global messages emerges in a local context, and there by ‘localize the exogenous, and make them relevant for their daily lives. The other parallel process to this localizing of global messages is the expression of local cultures in a global environment leading to an invigoration of local cultures.
6 Indian Scenarios and Media Imperialism

Policy of liberalization of the 1990s, Indian media have been growing astoundingly. The unbelievable growth of media in India, along with potential audience numbers, has today made Indian media and entertainment industry one of the most energetic sectors in the world. When the Government of India in 1990s allowed foreign investment it opened the Indian doors for foreign ownership, and television was the first who enjoyed this deregulation, and as a result of the entry of foreign and private channels, the industry was transformed from a government-owned single network to multi-channel industry. Today in India, there are more than 550 channels and more than 140 million households from across the nation which helps audience to get an idea of the lifestyle and culture of the westernized nations. The Indian television transformed from a single government owned player to a multi-channel global media market. Until, 1991 Indian audience, received a controlled, sometimes development oriented, and at other times, propaganda-induced television programming (NAMEDIA 1986; Singal and Rogers 2001; Verghese 1978). India’s large English speaking population is being offered unprecedented variety and choices. The content consists of popular international English series but the channels have been customized for Indian audiences. English channels command a higher advertising share with respect to the viewership share due to the strength of English audiences. FICCI in his 2011 report discussed that English channels are far ahead then the Hindi channels in advertising and viewership percentage.

Table 2: Power Ratio (Advertising / Viewership)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ENGLISH CHANNEL</th>
<th>HINDI CHANNEL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GEC</td>
<td>4.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOVIE +infotainment</td>
<td>1.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEWS</td>
<td>8.78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: FICCI KPMG REPORT 2011

The public-broadcaster DoorDarshan (DD) never recovered from the body blow of audiences running away to “global media.” Today the only captive audience of DD is 40 million or so homes in rural India which have no other option.

Table 3: Program composition by format and content of Doordarshan Channel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Doordarshan Channel</th>
<th>National Network %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>News and Current Affairs</td>
<td>31.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serials/ Plays/ Skits</td>
<td>30.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film and Film-based Entertainment</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School and University Education</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General/ Social Information</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Doordarshan 2011

Cable-network Siticable (Zee-owned), reaching 6.7 million homes, is a joint venture with Turner International India Limited, CNN, Cartoon Network, Pogo, CNBC and Reality TV. Among news...
channels, we have CNN-IBN, Times is now a symbiotic venture of Times Group and Reuters while NDTV is collaborating with ABC. Every major news channel and daily has a global tie-up. Technological advances and the introduction of entrepreneurial media management strategies also changed the electronic media industry in India. The study of transformation of Indian media at a macro level is significant not only because globalization has allowed access to a host of things hitherto represented as foreign to Indian culture by the media, but has also opened the floodgates for foreign media. Two decades of liberalization treats foreign entry into the country with fears of cultural imperialism, the media is caught between portraying a changing society that is adapting itself to the changing needs and Indian cultural values that have formed the backbone of country’s identity (Maya Ranganathan and Usha M.Rodriguecks).

7 Conclusion

The global media market is dominated by huge media conglomerates, most of them are based in United States. Domination of the first world countries’ programs is found worldwide, slowly and steadily it is influencing as well as destroying the media system and culture of third world countries. These media conglomerates are target the media backward countries to establish their setup. It is found the adoption in the programming style and format, content, production and distribution. Multinational production and marketing in the control of large corporations and multilateral media flows will establish their own patterns of dominance and dependency. These media moguls provide technical assistance to setup the structure of programming and help them importing the foreign programs at cheaper rates. They adopt the localization policy according to the taste of local culture, to survive in these countries also. But their ultimate goal is to earn more and more profit. In India only, there are more than five hundred television channels among them more than forty-five percent channels are foreign channels which broadcast foreign content only according to their culture, value and beliefs which directly or indirectly influence the mindset of people.

8 References

[8] Non-Aligned Summit (1973) At Algiers “Foreign Ideological Domination.”