

# Impact of “Cultural Imperialism” on Advertising and Marketing

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## Abstract

“Cultural imperialism”, a highly debated concept, refers to how an ideology or a way of life is exported from one country to another through movement of cultural goods. A major driver of cultural imperialism in the era of globalization, are large corporations, many of whom have their base in the United States. Viewed “as homogenizing forces”, these corporations through their global brands are known to sell the same tastes and styles along with their values and lifestyle to consumers throughout the world. Because there is controversy over whether global media industries create uniform desires and habits, globalization, for advertising and marketing, is one of the most discussed concepts in recent years.[1] This paper analyzes a large corpus of European and Indian print advertisements to argue that rather than homogenization, globalization may be encouraging a new form of hybridization.

**Keywords:** *Western imperialism, advertising, international marketing strategies, culture, emerging markets, hybridization, homogenization, globalization*

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## Introduction

Many theorists in recent years have argued that globalization is working in a fundamentally centripetal manner, forcing its ideology and lifestyle on other countries along with its products and services.[2] Scholars such as Wunderlich and Warriar, for example, suggest that historically, globalization is perceived to have originated from the economic and political domination of the USA, which is also spreading its values worldwide along with its products and services.[3] Yet another influential author, Benjamin Barber also states that, “globalization introduces a single world culture centered on consumerism, mass media, Americana and the English language.”[4] Bhikhu Parekh writes, “The fact remains that western culture today enjoys enormous economic and political power, prestige and respectability. Its interactions with other cultures occur in grossly unequal conditions and those at the receiving end often find it difficult to make autonomous choices.”[5] Herbert Schiller describes this process as “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” [6] Sui-Nam Lee observes that “communication imperialism is the process in which the ownership and control over the hardware and software of mass media as well as other major forms of communication in one country are singly or together subjugated to the domination of another country with deleterious effects on the indigenous values, norms and culture.”[7] The most common interpretations of globalization are that the world is becoming much more uniform through a technological, commercial and cultural synchronization emanating from the West. These perceptions are interrelated in the sense they are both variations of the same underlying theme of globalization as Westernization of the world. What do people mean when they talk about Westernization? As a matter of fact, a whole range of things leading from the consumer culture of Western capitalism, in particular, American capitalism, with its all too familiar icons (McDonald’s, Coke, Reebok, Nike) to the spread of European languages (particularly English) to styles of dressing, eating, drinking etc. The broad implications are that diffused by the western media, this process is not just homogenizing but also a threat to the cultures of the peripheral Third World nations.

As more and more developing countries open up their markets, the question of whether they are being increasingly subjugated to global capitalism and related Western values continues to be a valid one. It is also at the heart of the cultural imperialism thesis.[8]

## What Is Cultural Imperialism?

The cultural imperialism thesis is often invoked to explain the process whereby the relationship of culture to geographical and social territories is being increasingly reformulated in the era of globalization. [9] The idea of “imperialism”, as pointed out by J. Tomlinson, contains the notions of a purposeful project with the intentions of spreading a social system from one center of power across the globe.[10] At one level and as the notion suggests, certain cultures and their value systems are privileged because of historical circumstances. Colonialism, for example, enabled Western cultures to impose their values on the conquered peoples of Asia, Africa, the Americas and many other parts of the world. The discourse of colonization was based upon the cultural superiority of the West and the Western notions of economic progress and liberal democracy frequently provided the benchmarks against which other cultures were supposed to measure their sense of being.[11] No doubt Western imperialism did provide some of the essential infrastructures for the imposition of Western ideas, goods, values, institutions and practices around the world. The colonial powers of Britain and others were also undoubtedly the most powerful agents of cultural globalization. The end of colonization, however, ushered in a new era, one that saw the transition to a more egalitarian relationship between cultures. Decolonization overturned the expansionist logic that linked modernization to Westernization. It meant that the irresistible trend of globalization was no longer tied to this logic but was free to take a different course. As sociologist, Martin Albrow puts it, “We need to entertain the idea that globalization, far from being the last stage of a long process of development, is the arrest of what was taken for granted, a transformation arising out of a combination of different forces, which unexpectedly changes the direction of history. It could be the transition to a new era rather than the apogee of the old.[12] Let us recall that with the end of communism, globalization emerged as the basic defining element of a new World Order, one, characterized by the cessation of hostilities between the two dominant ideologies of the Cold War era: communism on the one hand and liberalism capitalism on the other. This however, presents us with a paradox: the apparent integration of global cultures exists along with its antithesis: the prevalence of fragmentation in the new world order necessitates the description of the present age as the age of extremes (Hobsbawn 1994). The now famous expression “Jihad vs McWorld” symbolizes in part this new reality.

Is globalization really a euphemism for Americanization? Francis Fukuyama, when asked the question replied, “I think it is and that is why some people do not like it. I think it has to be Americanization because in some respect, America is the most advanced capitalist society in the world today and so its institutions represent the logical development of market forces. Therefore, if market forces are what drives globalization then it is inevitable that Americanization will accompany globalization.”[13] Fukuyama, however, rejects the view that globalization is leading to cultural homogeneity, asserting that it is only leading to homogenization of certain aspects of the economy and society.[14] While protagonists of globalization claim that homogenization through Westernization is a good thing, the champions of multiculturalism maintain that “all countries are authentic in their own terms and that neither the West at large nor the United States in particular, has the right to impose its beliefs and values onto others.[15]

The objective of the present paper, limited to a study of print magazine advertising in Europe and India, is to analyze globalization within the context of the popular criticism that it is an imperialistic enterprise. It posits the thesis that cultural encounters of the West with the rest of the world are now substantially changing in their nature due to the shift of economic and political power from the West to the East.

## What Is Globalization?

There are many differing views on globalization. Its supporters describe it as an irresistible and welcome force that brings the best the world has to offer. For them, globalization is, *au fond*, a continuation, albeit

in an intensified and accelerated form, of the perduring challenge of modernization. Its critics, on the other hand, term it as a “juggernaut of untrammled capitalism”, which is leading the world to a particular type of homogeneity, west-centered (if not actually America-centric) and that the media, again controlled by the West, creates a kind of “Mcworld”, where western goods, capital, and ideas prevail. We would submit, however, that an equally strong case can be made out to suggest that globalization has been a two-way process, and that the civilizations of the East – Chinese and Indian to be more precise – provided the initial impetus with such discoveries as the compass, paper, the zero and the decimal system to globalization. Indeed, every one of the “high tech” fields of knowledge in the world a millennium ago such as paper, printing, gunpowder, wheelbarrow, kite, magnetic compass was already well established in China and at the same time, practically unknown elsewhere. Similarly, the decimal system, which emerged and became well entrenched in India between the second and the sixth centuries and was also used extensively soon thereafter by Arab mathematicians, reached Europe mainly in the last quarter of the tenth century. It was globalization that spread them across the world including Europe. Described as “the crystallization of the entire world as a single place[16], the idea of “globalization” most commonly, suggests interconnection and interdependency of all global areas as a result of economic and cultural practices, which do not, of themselves, aim at global integration but which nonetheless produce it.[17]

Summarizing the different views about globalization among contemporary theorists elsewhere, Held for example, says - first, globalization is characterized by homogenization of economy and culture. Some equate the modern trend of world integration to the expansion of “cultural imperialism” on a broader scale where the world is increasingly becoming homogenized and westernized while others believe that the impact of globalization is mixed. Second, there is the significance of increased connectedness and sharing of cultures; third, the view denies the existence of globalization and emphasizes continuation of unregulated capitalism and fourth, the consequences of contemporary global interactions as complex, diverse and unpredictable.[18] According to J. Tomlinson, globalization is a disruptive force that will ultimately weaken the cultural unity of all nation-states, not just those in the developing world[19]. A third perspective related to globalization is hybridization. This perspective does not, as such, give prominence to globalization as a homogenizing force, nor does it believe in localization as a resistive process opposed to globalization. Rather hybridization advocates an emphasis on processes of mediation that it views as central to cultural globalization. The question remains - do transnational media make cultures across the globe hybrid by bringing into their midst foreign cultural elements? Or have cultures always been to some extent hybrid meaning that transnational mass media has only strengthened an already existing condition? There is no obvious answer to this question because there is not enough empirical evidence about media and hybridization and because of the theoretical complexity of the situation. What does exist in terms of theoretical understanding and research seems to point to a middle ground. This position acknowledges that cultures have been in contact for a very long time through empire, trade, religion and conquest. Therefore a degree of hybridization of all cultures can be assumed.

## Aims

The present article analyses a large sample corpus of advertising in leading magazines of general interest in France, Germany and India i.e L'Express, Paris Match Der Spiegel, Stern and India Today and limited in period to six months to briefly discuss a few key issues in contemporary globalization debates such as: does globalization generate increasing homogeneity or heterogeneity? Should global companies adapt and localize their products in different countries? It takes into account a comparative and statistical analysis of advertising in two geographically diverse commercial regions – Europe and India – to suggest that in spite of our differences, we are moving, at least in the corporate world, to an intercultural ethos, an index to the rapid globalization process at hand. Why specifically choose these three countries? Germany and France, with cultural blends attractive to international marketers, were specifically selected to provide insights into the differences, no matter how subtle, among nations that are normally thought of as similar due to their geographical and cultural proximity. Does the economically unified Europe also signify a common set of consumer needs and wants? The reason why an emerging market like India was chosen for a comparative study with the two industrially advanced European countries is because first in an age where the global economic power is seen to be shifting from the West to the East, India makes for a particularly interesting case study. According to Goldman Sachs, the country, with a population of 1.2 billion, is poised, along with China, to be one of the leading global economies of the future. It is our view,

however, that the country, which is now experiencing breakneck economic growth, will not become easily Westernized despite globalization and a certain outer rapprochement with the West.

Which factors must companies take into account when advertising globally? Should product or brand names be changed? When should visuals or copy be customized? How often do companies opt for identical transfers? To address the question of whether uniform strategies ought to be used in communicating across cultures, a comparative study of western and non-western advertising is in order. In our view, advertising not only forms the interface between two of the most important products of globalization—international trade and the spread of a global more inclusive culture but it also has the ability to move fluently between the local and the global as well as between the concrete and the abstract.”[20]

The 19 product categories studied are: (i) perfume; (ii) cosmetics and toiletries; (iii) high-end fashion; (iv) watches; (v) pens; (vi) food and beverages; (vii) travel & leisure; (viii) automobiles and related products; (ix) computers; (x) telecommunications; (xi) technical products; (xii) housing/furniture; (xiii) industry & commerce; (xiv) finance & insurance; (xv) health; (xvi) humanitarian organizations; (xvii) energy; (xviii) media; (xix) other. The advertising corpus in all three countries was analyzed in terms of (i) linguistic codification (headlines, subhead, tagline/baseline/logo, body copy); (ii) visual codification (imagery); (iii) combined verbal/visual codification to arrive at certain broad conclusions, statistically based.

## Analysis and Results

The results of this study culled through an analysis of about 5000 advertising samples, indicate that there are only a few truly global brands and that their advertising is rarely completely standardized. For the most, localization takes into account globalization even while keeping the local flavor intact.

Let us first consider a quintessential luxury item—perfume. We have studied advertisements by parfumeurs such as Cacharel, Giorgio Armani, Chanel, Lancôme, Guy Laroche and Drakkar Noir. By and large, these companies use the same advertisements across France, Germany and India as testified by the fact that there were found five identical transfers. Lancôme, for instance, retained its original French copy (“Le parfum des instants précieux”) and visual (a white female model) in its Indian ads; Paloma Picasso retained its original French copy “Paloma Picasso crée Minotaure” and visual in its German ads. Similarly, the Guy Laroche ad for both the French and Indian markets also retained the same visual showing the naked upper torso of a Caucasian male with a woman standing directly behind him.

Any changes were minimal, and were usually in deference to local sensitivities. Cacharel, for example, advertises its Eden perfume in France using a frontal view of a nude young woman, accompanied by the slogan, “Le parfum défendu.” The Indian version of the ad is translated into English (“The Forbidden Fragrance”) and the visual shaded to obscure the model’s nudity.

High-end garment companies likewise tend to use the same advertisements across markets. Benetton, for example, uses its famous United Colors of Benetton branding all over the world.

To sell its high-end skin care products in India, Lancôme carried the same visual of a female Caucasian model in both France and India. The French text “La France a son mot à dire sur la beauté” however was translated in India as “France has a word for beauty”.

Watch companies also use globalized ad copy—“Omega Is a Sign of Excellence”; (Omega)” “Swiss Quality;” (Tissot) “A Different World”; (Rado)” “Officially Certified Swiss Chronometer;” (Rolex) and “Water-Resistant Swiss.” (Hermès) Piaget’s Indian ads retained the original French text “Joallier en horlogerie depuis 1874—Genève”.

Let us come to Computers. The visuals remain the same. But understandably the technical specifications are translated.

In the Technical Product category, the Philips slogan is the same in India and Germany: (G) Philips invents/Philips invents for you; (I) Philips – we invent for you.” The Japanese Pioneer used the same English slogan – “The art of entertainment” in all three countries. The German Bose retained both product name “Wave Radio” and English text – “Better sound through research”/“Big Sound Test” in all three countries.

Telecommunications companies, however, take a more mixed approach. Nokia and Alcatel use their English slogans, “Connecting People” and “Your Reliable Partners in Communications,” worldwide. In deference to the local culture however, Nokia carries local translations such as Menu (France); Speicher (Germany) and Menu (India). In a developing country like India, Nokia not only emphasizes the fact that it is the “world leader in cellular phones” but also that its mobile phones are user-friendly: “Nokia. The world’s most portable cellular phone/ Nokia introduces the world’s easiest to use cellular phone”. In one case, Motorola uses the phrase “Tu me manques” in France, with a literal English translation — “I Miss You” — appearing in its German ads. Yet it uses the French “Je t’aime” (“I love you”) in both countries, as the phrase is nearly universally understood throughout Europe. Siemens sells cell phones in Germany using the phrase “You can count up to ten, can’t you?” In a developing country with still high rates of illiteracy such as India, though, such an ad could be construed as offensive. Hence Siemens advertises itself in India as a leader that connects people to the “Global Village”. For example, “Local presence, Global Player”/“Connecting to the “Global Village”.

Travel companies also use a mix of standardized and customized advertising. Delta uses the same ads across France, Germany and India. Korean Airlines used the slogan “Les routes de la sérénité” in France to emphasize the “serene” aspect of the journey but adapted to “Lebensqualität non-stop” for the German market since the German consumer is known to have a special resonance with “Quality of life”

In the case of the automobile industry, BMW advertised in Germany as “Freude am Fahren” (“Craze for Driving”). In France, on the other hand, BMW made a special effort to integrate into the local culture by showing the Mona Lisa painting, the Versailles gardens etc. In India, where social status is all-important, BMW competing against other brands such as Mercedes and others, projected itself as the undisputed market leader by highlighting this aspect - “Setting the Pace in Automotive Status”/ “Unprecedented Standards in Luxury Motoring.” Of particular interest is the fact that, while BMW, Mercedes and Audi usually depict their products with French license plates in French ads, their Indian ads show German license plates—subtly emphasizing their foreign origin and enhancing their “snob value.”

Consumer electronics companies, however, appear to be the most likely to advertise differently across cultures. Leading companies continue to use global slogans, but they also produce domestic ads appealing to local tastes. For instance, Sony in India uses a Hindi slogan in its Handicam ads even while depicting a local wedding in the background—a bow to the Indian habit of videotaping major ceremonies for posterity. In France, on the other hand, Sony uses as local touch, a visual of the Eiffel Tower. How do we explain the differences apparent in this broad survey?

Apparently, internationally recognized luxury brands tend to stick to their global slogans, as the brand names, to use a cliché, “sell themselves.” All three international languages—English, French and German—are used widely, but English appears to dominate because so many brand names originated in the English-speaking world. Niche products, such as fashion and style items, are identified in French and sold using that language across markets.

Advertisers do, however, pay attention to the sensibilities of their target consumers, as we saw with the Siemens and Cacharel ads. Although Cacharel’s ads depicting a nude model made the same basic appeal in France and India, the shading of the model in the Indian version suggests a subtle bow to cultural pressures.

Multinational corporations often wish to transform themselves into “national” companies in the minds of their target audiences; their advertisers thus develop campaigns around particular themes suited to the local market (recall the Sony Handicam ad, for which local experts were consulted). Sometimes, advertisers use local symbols but leave the copy untouched—an ad will show an Indian girl instead of a

western one, for example. Similarly, companies may maintain the same symbols in their marketing materials but change the text to fit the local language and tastes.

One interesting detail that runs against popular belief is that a large number of American multinationals, such as McDonald's, do localize their ads. Because these companies sell mass-produced consumer items and aim to reach the greatest possible number of people, they must necessarily make local appeals. Even their products undergo occasional changes (Mc Aloo Tikki Burger must be sold only in India we assume!). These companies are more likely to copy the themes of their advertising in Europe but put it into local context; visually the most obvious will be Indians instead of Caucasians. On the other hand, expensive luxury items such as cars, haute couture, perfume and electronics launch uniform ad campaigns because their products appeal to an elite class of consumers that is more likely to speak a foreign language or to be familiar with the product itself. The majority of French-speaking Swiss companies - Rado, Tissot, Rolex, Hermes, Longines, Raymond Weil and Vuarnet have used their global English slogans everywhere.

Advertisers also take into account the level to which they expect customers to identify with a product's country of origin. As we have seen previously, German carmakers like Audi tend to depict their vehicles with French license plates when selling to those markets. French companies already sell comparable cars. Audi wants its cars to appear local to make them more palatable and to avoid being seen as competing with local manufacturers. In India, on the other hand, a customer buying a Mercedes typically hopes to make a statement by purchasing a foreign car. Depicting its vehicles with German license plates in its Indian advertisements thus makes Mercedes more attractive to local high-end consumers.

Lastly, although different industries may face different degrees of convergence of consumer demand, the trend appears to be especially strong in certain industries. The least culturally bound products such as computers, compact disc players, television etc are easier to market internationally than culturally bound products like food. This is because in high-tech industries such as telecommunications, consumer electronics, pharmaceutical products, banking and investment, there was, traditionally, very little consumer demand. The products and services in fact never existed until technology brought them to consumers. Indeed, consumers in different parts of the world were taught to use these products or services and therefore had very few culture specific preferences. As a result, the convergence of consumer demand in these industries is especially strong. In contrast, in industries where there has been long-standing demand - such as skincare or food - the convergence of consumer demand is relatively weaker.

This study shows that to a large extent, the effects of globalization are felt everywhere. Swiss watchmakers such as Rado, Tissot, Rolex, Hermes, Longines, Raymond Weil and Vuarnet for example, have used their global English slogans everywhere. Many automobile manufacturers have turned to using names for their cars that are either recognizable in many languages or invented and not found in any one of them - for example Mondeo (Ford), Pajero (Mitsubishi), Laguna (Renault). French and German speaking companies such as Piaget, Moderna Klobner and others used French and German to sell in India. Conversely, Indian companies such as Tata Industries have used French and German words (for example, 'Voila', 'Airbus Industrie' and 'Autobahn') to sell their products in the Indian market. Similarly, the American Chrysler and Motorola have used French to sell in Germany (recall the Motorola ad - "je t'aime" and the Chrysler Voyager ad "Grand Café des Arts")? The German Volkswagen used the French term "noblesse" to market its Golf car in Germany - "The Black Line stands for Noblesse and Elegance" ("Die Black Line steht für Noblesse und Eleganz"). At the same time, not every country is eager to give in to what they perceive as the corrosive effects of globalization. Hence even though both France and Germany have used English relatively extensively in their advertising - 163x and 634x respectively, Germany seems to accept English more easily than France as the language of international commerce. Most French companies also, by and large retained the same product name as also the French language in their marketing strategy. Of the 63 foreign companies operating in France, only 38 did not adapt to local circumstances. In Germany, of the 65 foreign companies present, only 26 did not adapt locally. In India, of the 36 companies operating in that country, only 11 chose to retain the same advertisement. One of the reasons why the overall figures for English are lower in the case of France - 163 as compared to 634 for Germany (see Table) - is because France over the years, has equipped itself with a veritable arsenal of decrees and directives against what it terms as "Franglais" or the intrusion of English into French (for example, le weekend, le parking or le marketing are now quasi French - they are integrated into the

French language with such other popular terms as “football”, “volley”, “goal”, “meeting”, “faire un sitting”, “un “sketch”, un “gag” etc). With more than 420 linguistic combinations now theoretically possible, France is plagued by the very real fear that soon everybody will simply give up and speak English[21]. Advertisements containing English terms, with a few exceptions, are therefore outlawed (by the 1994 Toubon law) unless accompanied by a translation. For the German market, on the other hand, the large majority of manufacturers have used some form of English to sell. Most have used the popular mixture of English and German known as Denglish to market their products. Audi for example, promises you “Die Power.” In contrast to French advertising, which had only 2 German language inputs (examples are Heineken and Citroen ads) German advertising contained 77 French language inputs sometimes even in combination with German. For example, “Zelda. Die belle époque lebt” (Cor). “VINS DE FRANCE machen uns immer so schon frisch; Leicht. Rassig Kraftig. Und so OH LA LA” (Vins de France); “Mit einem Côtes du Rhône zahle Ich zur crème de la crème” (Vins de France); “Rendez-vous mit einer Konigin (Cunard Travels); ‘Restaurant chez... Café (Davidoff Classic and Light Cigarettes); “Je t’aime” (Motorola); “Grand Café des Arts (Chrysler) In India, where English is the norm, what is particularly interesting is that Indian advertising contained 12 French terms and 5 German terms. What is more, just as in the European case, Denglish (combination of English and German) and Franglais (combination of French and English) demonstrate the development of a new form of global marketing that increasingly integrates the local and the global, there has now developed in India also a similar form of marketing popularly known as Hinglish (combination of English and Hindi). To cite a few examples, Chevrolet markets its Beat Diesel models in India by combining the excitement factor with fuel efficiency – “India drive khulke” (“India full throttle”). The Hero Honda motorcycle ad is focused exclusively on selling style – “Ab sirf style hi bolega” (“Only Style will speak”).

**Table:** *Frequency of Foreign Language Usage In Advertising*

	<b>France</b>	<b>Germany</b>	<b>India</b>
English	163 79%	634 78%	- -
French	- -	77 10%	12 35%
German	2 1%	- -	5 15%
Hindi	3 1%	- -	- -
Spanish	4 2%	24 3%	2 6%
Italian	13 6%	28 3%	- -
Arabic	3 1%	- -	7 21%
Others	19 9%	45 6%	8 24%
Total	207 100%	808 100%	34 100%

## Discussion

It is our view that the Western imperialism thesis while recognizing the trends towards Americanization does not give adequate recognition to various modes of resistance. It seems to assume that people everywhere passively fall prey to increasing Americanization and Westernization. For example, it ignores the way the French Government has sought to restrict the import of words of non-French origin through the implementation of such draconian laws as the 1994 Toubon Loi - the results of this study indicate that of the 20 American companies found in France, 12 had translated their slogan into French. The American

Rank Xerox Company is one of the few companies to retain English (“The Document Company”) in both France and Germany. Of course these protectionist policies whether in France, China or Cuba are not totally effective, because they are difficult to implement and maintain. Yet and the point we make is that the thesis although useful in highlighting exchanges in the economic domain, does not necessarily recognize all the complexities of local traditions in many other areas of cultural exchanges such as food, drink and entertainment where Western cultural products have to negotiate the complex local histories and traditions. In an effort to beat competition in the same or similar product category, many global brands have changed their product mix to suit local tastes. Coke and Pepsi for example, are not only sweeter in India but both companies also use well-known local Bollywood actors Hrithik Roshan and Shah Rukh Khan to sell their products thereby associating what is fashionable in America with what is also fashionable in India. For the Indian market that is 40 per cent vegetarian, with an aversion to beef and pork among meat-eaters but with the general Indian fondness for spice with everything, McDonalds has come up with the McAloo Tikki potato burger, Mac Pan Curry (cottage cheese) the all-mutton McMaharajah and sauces like McMasala and McImli to satisfy the Indian taste for spice. McDonald’s has also introduced wraps keeping in view India’s penchant for chapattis. However when it comes to other things such as technology, product, client service, hygiene and operational systems, McDonald’s has strict standardized specificities.[22] As the McDonald’s, Coke and Pepsi examples in India show, economic development is encouraging a new form of hybridization. This fusion is taking place not just in the domain of food but also apparel. Traditional Indian wear in fact, is now getting more fusion, spawning a new look that is called East-West outfits. This seems to suggest that globalization and localization as far as they refer to culture, are interpretative processes. As M. Featherstone puts it, “no society ever receives cultural products from the outside passively, without engagement. They are usually modified and molded by the recipients to suit their local needs, values and aspirations.[23] Or as noted by J. Tomlinson, “But what does this distribution of uniform cultural goods actually signify, other than the power of some capitalist firms to command wide markets for their products around the world? Well, if we assume that the sheer global presence of these goods is in itself a sign of a convergence towards a single capitalist culture, we are probably utilizing a rather impoverished concept of culture – one that reduces a “culture” merely to its material goods.”[24] In other words, there are no ‘global’ or ‘foreign’ meanings without ‘local’ reference points, and vice versa; culture itself exists only when it is viewed relative to another culture”[25]. This is reiterated by Robertson who describes globalization as a dialectical movement in which the global is enriched by local specificities – to which it gives a universal reach and in which the local is, for its part, also enriched by the influences stemming from the global.”[26] What follows from all this is not simply the point that the imperialism thesis underestimates the cultural resilience and dynamism of non-western cultures, their capacity to indigenize Western imports, but also that in the modern world, the earlier trend of cultural influence from the West to the periphery is now increasingly being reversed. Only a little over thirty years after the wave of globalization was unleashed by the Reagan-Thatcher revolution, some of the advanced economies such as the US, Europe and Japan seem to be in serious if not terminal decline. Investors earning meagre returns in the West are now looking to move elsewhere. The BRIC nations and China and India, in particular, as the two fastest growing Asian economies appear to be the obvious beneficiaries. As a result, it is anticipated that the cultural flows in the contemporary world will no longer proceed from a so-called “hegemonic cultural center” to the world’s peripheries as is generally assumed but would be reciprocal and multi-directional.

## Conclusions

Two points of relevance emerge – the first is that globalization can be “a tandem operation of local/global dynamics leading to a cultural mixing or global *mélange* of cultures[27] This viewpoint is forwarded by many scholars such as Pieterse Nederveen who suggest that what is taking place today is a global culture of hybridization, a process of braiding rather than simply diffusion from developed to developing countries[28]. In his view, what we may be witnessing today is a reversal of the Western cultural domination with the world cultures now moving towards what Pietersee Nederveen refers to as “cultural hybridization” – “the hybridization is the making of global culture a global *mélange*”[29]. Second, it would seem that with the emergence of the BRIC markets, the world cultural experiences are moving, not in a singular direction of uniformity and standardization but rather as a two-way process that includes the impact of non-western cultures on the west. For example, Indian cuisine such as Chicken Tikka Masala is extremely popular in England. Balti, a Pakistani Curry, is also a favorite. The Chinese take-away, is

ubiquitous. Consider also the fact that the symbol of quintessential Englishness, the cup of tea. Tea of course, is not grown in Britain but came from China and India. The Indian film industry, Bollywood, is not only bigger than Hollywood but it now has a global reach too (for example, *Monsoon Wedding*, *Bend It Like Beckham*, *Lagaan* etc). Indian words such as *karmayogin*, *guru*, *kundalini*, *chakra* etc are now an integral part of the international lingo. Similarly, Jazz music, originally invented by black musicians, is now globally popular. All this, as we have argued, is also leading to the development of a hybrid culture – or what Pieterse Nederveen describes as “accelerated globalization and cultural mixing [30] - that increasingly integrates both the local and the global. In fashion, music and even food, this translates as a fusion of East and West (for example, *Tandoori Pizza*, *Mc Aloo Tikka*). The point we seek to make here is that if indeed a global culture is emerging, it will be essentially a hybrid, “cut and mix culture.[31] Or as Lie [32] puts it, “cultural globalization builds on existing theories and ideas of dependency, Westernization, cultural imperialism, cultural synchronization and the “global village”. What is particularly interesting is that non-Westernization is now just as much a part of globalization as Westernization is. In our view, an interconnected world allows ideas and products from every part of the world to reach every other part of the world. And when they get to their new destination, they are not imbibed wholesale but adapted to fit the local situation (i.e glocalisation). We do not wish to deny that the West, in a certain sense, continues to be powerful. But at the same time, this power, which is closely aligned with its technological, industrial and economic power, is not the whole story. In other words, the situation is much more complex than the simple “either”/”or” suggested by the term “Jihad vs McWorld”.

This study concludes with the observation that the cultural imperialism thesis although useful in illuminating exchanges in the economic domain, may not necessarily recognize all the complexities of local traditions. Global corporations like McDonald’s or Coke do not adapt to local preferences because of any philosophical commitment to global diversity. They do so because they have discovered that local tastes are not easily changed or homogenized. Consequently, globalization, in our view, is more likely to be associated with multiculturalism rather than with westernization or homogenization.

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