

Chapter 20: Culture and Community in the Global Age: 20-2a The Media and the Message
Book Title: The Earth and Its Peoples: A Global History 7th Edition Update, AP® Edition
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20-2a The Media and the Message

The fact that the most pervasive elements of global culture have their origins in the West raised concerns in many quarters about **cultural imperialism** (Domination of one culture over another by a deliberate policy or by economic or technological superiority. (p. 590)).

Critics complained that entertainment conglomerates were flooding the world's movie theaters and television screens with Western images and that goods catering to Western tastes but manufactured in countries with low labor costs, like Bangladesh and Indonesia, were flooding world markets. In this view, global marketing seemed especially insidious in trying to shape a world with a single Western outlook based on capitalist ideology, and at the same time suppressing or devaluing traditional cultures and alternative ideologies. As the leader of the capitalist world, the United States was seen as the primary culprit.

The pace of cultural globalization began to quicken during the economic recovery after World War II. The Hollywood films and American jazz recordings that had become popular in Europe and parts of Asia continued to spread. But the birth of electronic technology opened contacts with large numbers of people who did not have access to movie theaters or phonographs.

The first step was the development of cheap transistor radios that could run on a couple of small batteries. Perfected by American scientists at Bell Telephone Laboratories in 1948, solid-state electronic transistors replaced power-hungry and less reliable electron tubes in radios and other devices. Tube radios, which in some countries required a license to own, had spread worldwide in the decades before the war, but small transistor radios reached parts of the world where homes lacked electricity.

Television, made possible by the electron-scanning gun invented in 1928, became widely available to Western consumers in the 1950s. In poorer parts of the world, TVs were not common until the 1980s and 1990s, after mass production and cheap transistors made sets more affordable. Outside the United States, television broadcasting was usually a government monopoly at first, following the pattern of telegraph and postal service and radio broadcasting. Governments expected news reports and other programming to disseminate a unified national viewpoint.

However, government monopolies eroded as the high cost of television production and the invention of video recording opened up global markets for rebroadcasts of American soap operas, adventure series, and situation

AP® Exam Tip

Identify and explain several examples of globalized popular and consumer culture.

comedies. By the 1990s a global network of satellites brought privately owned television broadcasting to even remote areas of the world, and the VCR (videocassette recorder) provided an even greater variety of programs. In the following decade DVD players continued the trend. As a result of wider circulation of programming, people often became familiar with different dialects of English and other languages. People in Portugal who in the 1960s had found it difficult to understand Brazilian Portuguese became avid fans of Brazilian soap operas. And immigrants from Albania and North Africa often arrived in Italy with a command of Italian learned from Italian stations whose signals they could pick up at home.

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