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Beyond Borders: A Cultural Analysis of
American Cultural Imperialism

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Abstract

The popular concept of Imperialism can evoke ideas of old colonial regimes such as those of America or Africa. Nevertheless, with the arrival of modernization and the mass media, the territorial control typical of old methods of Imperialism is left aside, focusing on a much more silent, complex and deeper conquest: culture. The term Cultural Imperialism is often surrounded by an aura of uncertainty and incomprehension. For this reason, in the present paper this concept is explored, along with other related ones. Afterwards, there is an examination of American culture and its subsequent expansion in other countries, as an example of said Cultural Imperialism.

Keywords: Culture, Imperialism, Nation, Modernization, America, Market.

Resumen

El concepto popular de Imperialismo puede evocar ideas de antiguos regimenes coloniales como los de America o África. Sin embargo, con la llegada de la modernización y de los medios de comunicación, el control territorial propio de antiguos métodos de Imperialismo pasa a segundo plano, con el objetivo de centrarse en lograr una conquista más silenciosa, compleja y profunda: la cultura. El termino Imperialismo Cultural suele estar rodeado de un aura de incertudumbre y desconocimiento, por ello, en este trabajo se exploran este concepto y otros relacionados. Tras esto, se examina la evolución de la cultura estadounidense y su posterior expansión a otros países como ejemplo práctico de dicho Imperialismo Cultural.

Palabras clave: Cultura, Imperialismo, Nación, Modernizacion, America, Mercado.

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1. Introduction

Throughout history, there have been hundreds of conflicts between nations which, by one way or another, ended up in the territorial expansion of one over the other, leading one nation to gain sovereignty over another nation. This concept is called Imperialism, and it has played an essential role in human history, and in the development and establishment of nations as we know them nowadays.

Some authors would argue that, at present, the concept of Imperialism as we knew it before has evolved to have deeper meaning than just a mere takeover of territory. Authors like Hobson (2011) and Mack (1976) talk about a concept that, although related to traditional Imperialism, carries different nuances: Cultural Imperialism. Cultural Imperialism could be used to refer to the cultural imposition that some nations, especially from the 16th to the 19th century, forced upon newly conquered territories. However, a new use of the term currently suggests the expansion or imposition of one culture over others without conquest, but rather through the use of capital and technologies, especially with the emergence of mass-culture and mass-information, in the last decades of the 20th century.

If we are to think of one example of cultural expansion by means of technological developments and the use of mass-communication, the expansion of the US culture immediately comes to mind. *Americanization*, as some authors have called it, is a phenomenon that has caught the attention of historians and sociologists, for apparent reasons: how fast it has spread and how efficiently it has settled into many different countries. So, there is one question we need to answer: how has it happened?

In the present paper, first, as part of the historical context, key terms will be explored and defined, all of them essential to understand what Cultural Imperialism is and how it functions; such terms are: Imperialism, Nationalism, Internationalism and

Colonialism. Then, a brief explanation of one case that serves as a premise for Cultural Imperialism will be examined. Afterwards, the concept of Cultural Imperialism will be properly explored. Later, as part of the topic analysis, we will answer two different questions: 1. how does American Cultural Imperialism work? and 2. what does it pursue? For this, we focus on the decline of traditional popular culture in favor of mass-consumption in the US and, then, in the expansion of this kind of culture outside the US and its purposes. Finally, a particular case study will be explored as to exemplify it: the progressive Americanization of Spain.

2. Historical Context

2.1 An approach to Imperialism

A concept like Imperialism is usually related to politics, therefore, it is susceptible to changes of thought, or manipulation by political practitioners to meet their interests. Its approach can change very quickly depending on the scenario it is presented. Some authors that tried to set a theoretical definition of Imperialism found this to be a problem, and came to similar conclusions. For example, in an analysis of diverse Imperialism studies, Mack (1974) states that: “Discussion between proponents of rival theories have usually tended to produce greater confusion than clarity. For one thing there is no agreement about the meaning of Imperialism itself, or about the phenomenon it is supposed to describe” (Mack, 1). Therefore, definitions and studies of Imperialism seem to be always surrounded by an aura of subjectivity, hindering an objective approach. A similar conclusion is reached by Hobson (2011), who states: “A certain broad consistency in its relations to other kindred terms is the nearest approach to definition which such a term as Imperialism admits.” (Hobson, 1) Meaning, that we can only follow an adequate approach if we take into consideration other terms which give form or shape to the definition of Imperialism, these being: Nationalism, Internationalism and Colonialism (Hobson, 1). We ought to take into consideration these terms if we are to define Imperialism; however, these are equally difficult to define, too; due to them being inevitably linked to political practices, subjectivity is often surrounding them.

The idea of Nationalism we are approaching is the historical struggle towards building a solid consciousness of both nation and belonging, which saw its prime in the nineteenth century. For instance, Reynolds (2005) defines Nationalism as

[...] the idea or assumption that nations are natural, given, objectively existing human communities, each of which is assumed, generally in a vague and unreasoned way, not only to have its own common culture, myths, history, and destiny, but also to be a political community with a right to what is now called self-determination. (Reynolds, 2).

Reynolds stresses that Nationalism is the belief in the existence of nations, or, more specifically gaining consciousness about the natural distribution of mankind in smaller communities called nations. Thus, a nation would be, in many ways, a natural political unity that bonds over common interests, culture, and its past, present and future. Hobson (2011) agrees with the idea of Nationalism that Reynolds (2005) defends, stating that it is the struggle towards political union, and gaining consciousness about what it means (Hobson, 1). Furthermore, Hobson also mentions some other factors that he considers may influence a nationalist consciousness to rise; for example, sometimes it may be the linguistic or religious aspects those that create the borders between nations. In some other cases, the geographical limits are the natural borders that mark the separation. But the strongest reason of them all may be the political precedents of a nation. Having a common history may help to generate collective pride (or disgrace) feelings, and, in either case, it may serve as a huge stimulus for a nation to grow national consciousness. (Hobson, 3). An example of a religion and history serving as means for the creation of a nation is the Partition of Ireland (1921), a conflict in which religious and political differences that had existed for some time among the population were the causes of separation between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland (Lynch, 5).

Continuing with Nationalism being an influential part of Imperialism, Hobson states that when the bases of Nationalism are set, a nation has possibilities, depending on their projection plans and antecedents, of developing a local particularist attitude. This attitude may influence the national sentiments, having different outcomes depending on the social atmosphere. In the lowest spheres of a nation's society, this particularist attitude is manifested through relaunching local traditions and popular culture, while in the more dominant population, it may create a sentiment of Chauvinism and national 'destiny'. A progressive degradation of this genuine nationalism gives place to the breaking of its natural limits, seeking expansion, whether it is territorial, economic, cultural or all, making way for Colonialism (Hobson, 4) a concept that will be as important as Nationalism itself.

Therefore, we will understand Nationalism as the national consciousness which a particular nation develops on itself, regardless of their political orientation or their development plans.

Another term which is of vital importance for approaching Imperialism is Colonialism. Colonialism is a concept which often leads to discrepancies among scholars. On the one hand, most consider Colonialism an illegitimate form of expansion of nationality, due to the historical precedents of Colonialism of western European nations; “the imposition of white rule on alien peoples inhabiting lands” (Emerson, 1). Thus, referring to the act of imposing the will of a nation, by force, over a foreign subdued population, for the purpose of benefiting, especially in terms of economy. On the other hand, others refer to this forced expansion simply as Imperialism, and understand the concept of Colonialism differently; “Colonialism, where it consists in the migration of part of a nation to vacant or sparsely peopled foreign lands” (Hobson, 4). Meaning that Colonialism is a legitimate form of expansion, consisting in populating vacant or semi-vacant lands exclusively, therefore, it would not necessarily include the imposition of customs and culture over the population. This newly obtained territory would keep the relations with the home nation, establish the home language, culture and institutions, among other cultural and social factors. In any of the two understandings of Colonialism which are presented, it is agreed that Colonialism means an expansion of nationality, whether it is invasive towards another nation or not. This perception of the term Colonialism could be key, or cause trouble, in an analysis of any historical Imperialism if it is misunderstood. If an Imperialist regime includes Colonialism, thus, and tries to expand over new territories, then we would be dealing with the invasive meaning of the concept; otherwise, the act of Colonialism by itself would not be Imperialism. This reasoning proves the internationalist factor to be a logical part of Imperialism too; Imperialism is necessarily international.

Given the key elements of Imperialism, up until this point, we can draw our own conclusion about Imperialism: it is, generally, an illegitimate form of national expansion, executed by nations with an established national consciousness, towards another nation;

being the *modus operandi* Colonialism in its invasive meaning. Imperialism has been a turning point for some nations, it could turn out to be a huge influential power in many key aspects of a nation, especially in, arguably, the most important element of a nation: its culture.

2.2 New England, a premise of Cultural Imperialism

English colonization of America started in the first half of the seventeenth century. Puritans fled from England to the New World and established diverse settlements along the New England shore. The Massachusetts Bay colony soon came out as the largest power among the New England colonies. The expansion's *modus operandi* consisted in seeking for disused soil and using those terrains without permission of local natives, founding the so-called "townships" or "plantations" (Greer, 193). About the permission of the natives, the puritan minister Francis Higginson stated:

They doe generally professe to like well of our comming and planting here; partly because there is abundance of ground that they cannot possess nor make use of, and partly because our being here will be a meanes both of reliefe to them when they want, and also a defence from their Enemies (Greer, 193)

Natives were not a matter of consideration; colonizers did not seek to slave them yet but neither did they seek their permission to stay. "It elevated land over people as the primary object of the colonizer's attention" (Tomlins, 1).

Colonizers obtained royal charters granted by the New England Council, an extension of the English Crown. Those charters were licenses for colonizers, which "legally" authorized them to use the soils of New England as they wished, with the condition that the supreme sovereignty would belong to the English Kingdom. The charter's owner had absolute authority over the granted lands, the procedure went similar to feudalism. Social hierarchies were established, the owner had plenty of liberties for doing with the lands as he wished, he pronounced the laws and ordinances and was responsible

for the distribution of the territory, among others. To top it off, natives were not often considered in such charters, where their land was being distributed. Regarding the fact of ignoring native's ownership, Tomlins quotes baroque poet Crashaw: "These things they haue, these they may spare, these we neede, these we will take." (Tomlins, 21). Some thinkers of the time pronounced similar statements about the colonial pursuit, such as Peckham and Gentili, who considered natives were far from being civilized and conceived them practically as beasts and parasites. (Tomlins, 2010). These statements lead us to the conclusion that the aims of the nation were in large part in favor of snatching native's land.

Natives were usually disfavored in the charters, directly or indirectly. The Pennsylvania Charter (1681) is a good example of the incivility that natives received from part of the English colonizers. The Pennsylvania Colony was ruled by William Penn, who was granted "free and absolute power" (Tomlins, 50) along with the permission of making war against natives if they ever could mean an impediment for the colonizers. Paradoxically, the Pennsylvania charter was also meant to follow Christian principles regarding the natives; "reduce the savage Natives by gentle and just manners to the Love of Civil Societie and Christian Religion". (Tomlins, 50). Penn, as well as other colony regents, could mold all the significant points of a society, such as political, economic, social, and cultural factors. Any aspect of the local society was erased in favor of English appropriations. English culture took control over foreign culture(s) by force.

There are lots of scholars trying to prove the nature of New England's culture after colonization. Some researchers, for instance, believe that New England's culture is a direct reflection of English culture, a cultural transfer, meaning that it was simply rooted in the New World by English migrants, who would have carried their folkways with them. (Fischer, 1991). Fischer's research of the topic in *Albion's Seed* is an illustrative example of a theory of cultural transfer. In this research, Fischer studies early American folkways and their connection with particular English cultures of specific regions. Fischer distinguishes four different migrations from England to New England, depending on the origin and destination of the migrants. The Great Migration to Massachusetts Bay (1629-

1640) headed by Puritan magistrates, was formed in its majority by English Puritans, upper rank farmers and their families, who lived in towns or villages from east England. Tidewater Virginia (1640-1675) composed by around three quarters of male servants from south and west England and headed by Royalist and Anglican elites, most of them descendants of armorial families. The Delaware Valley (1675-1725) headed by elite wealthy Quakers and formed by regular Quakers and their supporters, who were mainly from north and midland of England and Wales, later arrivals included European pieties. The southern backcountry (1717-1775) formed in its majority by northern Britain and Ireland families of mid-low rank, many were Presbyterians and low-church Anglicans. Each migration carried its specific culture and combination of folkways, regarding architecture, food, dress, speech patterns, religion, family structure, etc. These newly installed cultures would eventually undergo a consolidation that would strongly affect the institutions and the society, leading to significant “change-regimes” and continuities that shaped early American history (Fischer, 1991).

However, some others think that such cultural replication from English settlers did not happen, but a cultural transition instead, which has its base in English culture, and, due to the new conditions, it “evolved” into what some consider a different culture. For instance, Anderson’s approach on the topic, which does not agree with the cultural distinction between different migrations previously stated by Fischer. Instead, she defends that the cultural transfer to New England is an adaptation of the general English culture, and not a combination of specific regional cultures, as she states that Fischer misidentifies the regional cultures involved in the emigration and the cultural transition. (Anderson, 3).

Fischer and Anderson have different perspectives about New England’s cultural transition. Fischer defends that the different regional cultures were well-established in New England, and they could be identified. Then, once they were rooted, they were reshaped as a result of long-exposure to a new scenario as it is New England. Anderson, instead, states that the cultural transition was more natural and simpler. She rejects the fact of different regional cultures taking control and eventually evolving until they became the base of

American culture. Alternatively, she suggests that: “New England culture incorporated aspects of English regional and national traditions only insofar as they suited the religious and material requirements of the population.” (Anderson, 8). Meaning that New England’s culture evolved exclusively for supplying spiritual and material necessities as they were needed. For example, Fischer’s correlation of building materials in New England:

Consider, for instance, the Bay colonists' use of wood as a preferred building material. Fischer maintains that this was an "old folk custom that had been carried from the east of England" (p. 63) and dismisses the possibility that such a preference may chiefly have derived from the availability of timber in New England. (Anderson, 5)

No nation lives solely for a culture, rather a culture is the reflection of a specific population. If the population goes through a radical change, as it is shipping to the New World, it is logical to think that the culture will not remain the same anymore, because they will have to adapt to new conditions. This leads to a change of mentality in the population, and consequently a cultural change. Regardless of the nature of the cultural imposition, both Fischer’s and Anderson’s approaches agree on the cultural transition in favor of the newcomer, and recognize old British culture to be the base of North American culture. Although it was not considered in the charters, cultural imperialism was a crucial factor in New England’s colonization.

Cultural imposition, whether it is intentional or not, means a radical change in the subject population’s lifestyle and in a nation’s future. A nation’s culture is a component of such importance that it can play a decisive function in conflicts and key elements of its history. In consequence, it is a matter of time until it may become the subject of manipulation by Imperialistic nations for accomplishing their goals.

2.3 The concept of Cultural Imperialism

Cultural consciousness might not seem an important factor to consider when talking about Imperialism. Unaware people might prefer a stronger army to fight colonists rather than a well-established culture, but the truth is that culture is equal to, or even more important than economic power or a large army when engaged with Imperialism.

A study carried out by Van Dinh (1972) gathers some of the opinions of “Third World” thinkers about Imperialism and the importance of the local culture in the colonies. Quoting Amilcar Cabral, imperialist control tries to establish cultural domination over the subject population and eliminate the most important element of the local culture (Van Dinh, 40). He also adds that the cultural consciousness is the most important factor among the subject population to keep faith in regaining their freedom. A nation which is completely dominated and lacks political, military, or economic resistance, may end up finding a way to rise against Imperialist control if they keep their own culture alive. If the cultural resistance manages to survive the Imperialist repression, at a given point, it could potentially reshape the cultural resistance and become a military, political or economic force, which will help the local population fight off the invader (Van Dinh, 40). This statement relates the cultural factor with the national consciousness. The culture of a nation is what differentiates it from others, and it is the key to its existence and maintenance. Thus, it is logical to think that what could set free a nation from Imperialism is the same thing that makes a nation unique, its culture. Culture proved to be the most important factor for the unity and consolidation of a nation. Any other components of a nation, as it could be the army and the political unity, seem to be simpler targets to defeat when talking of Imperialism against a traditionally considered less-developed nation.

Culture still plays an important role nowadays; it is directly related with our way of life. An analysis conducted by Inglehart et. Baker (2000) talks about “Modernization

theory”, which consists in the belief that industrialization and economic development are incompatible with the persistence of traditional values, which will eventually be replaced by modern values, carried by a modern lifestyle, consequently displacing the traditional culture (3).

Industrialization leads to occupational specialization, rising educational levels, rising income levels, and eventually brings unforeseen changes-changes in gender roles, attitudes toward authority and sexual norms; declining fertility rates; broader political participation; and less easily led publics. (Inglehart and Baker, 4)

The western nations’ industrialization and general economic growth resulted in a new world order. It is called “Modern World-System”, according to Wallerstein (in Schiller, 6). In short, it consists of a global market which is oriented towards the maximum profitability, maximum production and utility of technology invention. A series of state structures, directed to the profitability from this global market and obtain economic growth, and appropriation of the excessive labor, product of various exploitative processes. (Schiller, 6).

The “New World-System” has become an established ideology among western nations. This is translated into a huge change in the regular population’s life, because, as explained before, traditional values are left behind for new ones which will fit better in this “New World-System”. Schiller (1976) argues that this process of cultural transition is highly influenced by mass flow of communication among nations, especially from more economically developed nations towards less-developed ones which are yet in struggle to reach their economic independence. This communication flow reflects old imperialist connections, according to Schiller, since “[...] they almost always reveal aspects of command-and-obey relationships” (Schiller, 2). So, although under different conditions, the central idea remains. “The forces that influence consciousness are decisive determinants of a community's outlook and the nature and direction of its goals” (Schiller, 1). Thus, logically, a forced market-colonization could not succeed in the long term, because the

cultural consciousness of an oppressed nation would apply the same resistant role as in old imperialisms.

Cultural resistance could mean the foreign market ejection at some point. This is the reason why a cultural conquest makes more sense from an Imperialist perspective; because when the cultural resistance of a nation is overcome, the installation of a foreign market will not have any kind of resistance. In the same way as an Imperialist nation in the past tried to expand their limits by conquering other nations physically, by force, this politico-economic system tries to do so by conquering other markets and governmental institutions, aiming at controlling the growing communication systems and the information flow, seeking primarily cultural control. This leads to an evolution of the traditional definition of Imperialism, popularly known as “New Imperialism”, which bases its efforts in Cultural Imperialism to pursue its goals.

There is yet another complicating factor that especially affects the cultural-communications sphere of the world system. Cultural-informational outputs are largely, though not entirely, determined by the same market imperatives that govern the overall system's production of goods and services. Yet, as we are well aware, cultural-informational outputs represent much more than conventional units of personal-consumption goods: they are also embodiments of the ideological features of the world capitalist economy. They serve, extremely effectively, to promote and develop popular support for the values, or at least the artifacts, of the system. (Schiller, 7)

Schiller supports the idea that culture and communications are of large importance for Imperialism, both for conquering and defending their already established control. Thus, if the cultural resistance could become political, economic, or military resistance in the past, it makes a lot of sense that the control of the cultural consciousness of a nation could eventually turn into economic, military or political control. The “New World System” base is Cultural Imperialism, and the reason for its success is the importance of culture for nations and its potential to condition a nation's future.

Cultural Imperialism, as we will use the term in the present work, refers to a nation's adoption of a foreign culture not necessarily by force, and it has had as many methods and appearances as times it has been executed. A matter of such importance and complexity must be explored carefully in order to be well executed by a nation. The topic analysis of this paper will explore the modus operandi of what is, arguably, the most important and influential Cultural Imperialism of all times, American Cultural Imperialism, to answer two main questions: 1. how does it work, and 2. what does it pursue?

3. Topic Analysis: American Cultural Imperialism

3.1. Decline of American Popular Culture; Rise of Mass-Consumption Culture.

American culture has become, without a doubt, the most widespread culture around the globe. Its impact has been so gigantic that it does not even need to be proven. It would just take a moment of reflection to appreciate the vast expansion of American cultural elements like Hollywood or Disneyland in foreign countries. While the United States is a relatively young country, it has seen its culture and international relationships achieve its peak higher and faster than previous hegemonic cultures.

Although American foreign policies suffered radical changes throughout its history, they managed to spread their culture throughout the globe like no one had ever done before, and they are still expanding. In consonance with previous points of this dissertation, a cultural imposition often carries many more side-effects than simply a cultural replacement. Consequences that range from cultural issues to mercantile consequences which shaped ordinary life as we know it today. Bowen (1985) defines Cultural Imperialism as the domination and eventual subversion of an autonomous culture in favor of another culture, and as a concomitant of empire-building for Imperialist nations. (Bowen, 2). This definition suits old forms of Imperialism, such as England's cultural undermining of New England, as well as American cultural imperialism too, often called "New Imperialism". In order to understand how American culture became the most widespread culture of the globe, it would be appropriate to take a deep look at what American culture looks like and what it is built around.

Bowen (1985) describes the American culture as market-based and "almost completely stripped of regional or philosophical values and not appealing to any particular

educational level, taste or ethnic background” (Bowen, 7), giving birth to a kind of “minimal culture” thus, a culture without particularities. A product of mass industrialization, education, politics and consumption (Bowen, 7). Accordingly, we can see that American culture is reduced mainly to popular culture once we notice that the cultural base is aimed for making the population be part of a mass-consumption system.

A minimal culture, often called ‘Digital Culture’ or ‘Capitalist Culture’ too (Hassan, 2020), refers to a culture which relates the advancement of technology and modernity to specific social changes, which eventually will be translated into the oblivion of traditional values. A culture ruled by the market and its trends, thus, reducing itself chiefly in popular culture. This minimal culture grows proportionally with modernization. A nation which is well developed technologically will possess more tools for encouraging mass-consumption, as well as the gears by which the market reaches the population and expands: TV, satellites, videotapes, films, radio, etc. (Bowen, 7). This fact is supported by Inglehart and Baker’s (2000) modernization theory stated before; old values being replaced by modern ones which fit better in a deeply industrialized nation. “Traditional values were not only mutable but could-and should-be replaced by modern values, enabling these societies to follow the (virtually inevitable) path of capitalist development” (Inglehart et. Baker, 3). According to these authors (2000), the disengagement of traditions ends up sinking societies into capitalist economic systems and trends. This statement seems logical considering the huge number of technological developments done in modern history.

Technological developments fit the mass-consumption culture perfectly since there could not be a better environment for it to rise considering the number of means for expanding globally and cause the removal of old values. For instance, old traditions such as devoted religion or familiar adherence require the attention and time of the population, for which they are contrary to capitalist trends. Holding old values would mean a lack of attention in capitalist advertisement. That change of mentality in favor of a minimal culture would be less likely to occur, since old values would prevail in the society and in its lifestyle. Rather, the media redirects the population's attention, from a more spiritual culture

towards a more materialistic one. This mass-consumption approach turns out to praise neo-liberal economic measures that promote 'economic freedom' and 'consumer choice'. Such economic measures comprehend adjustments which assist free trade, the lack of supervision by any public body, and privatization of public services. The privatization of public services that once were available for everyone also helps shape the minimal culture, since they become accessible only for people who can afford being solvent consumers. (Guttal, 3).

In contrast, Blake, (2001) in an analysis of Kammen's *American Culture, American Tastes: Social Changes and the 20th Century* (2000) contends that the beginning of the 20th Century (specifically from 1885 to 1935) witnessed the pinnacle of American popular culture's commercialization, and therewith a period of cultural transition. Kammen's work also helps to clarify some unexplained aspects of Bowen's article, in particular, what American popular culture is. At times, scholars use American popular culture and mass-culture interchangeably, when their distinction is key to comprehend such radical change in the American culture in the early 20th Century. Contrary to other cultural studies, which implicitly conceive popular culture as everything that did not belong to the most elite form of cultures, (Blake, 2) Kammen hypothesizes about a cultural hierarchy before the American cultural transition period. The author endorses the idea of American popular culture becoming mass-culture since its over-commercialization began, along with privatization of leisure, audience passivity and the standardization of products (Blake, 2). This transition was originated by technological developments, and the transformation of the population's leisure-time into consumerist-related activities.

Kammen marks the 1930s as the critical period regarding popular culture, a period in which "open" leisure-activities (no economic-waste involved) coexisted with the rising of consumerist activities. However, the latter outlasted its free predecessor, modifying cultural patterns, until eventually popular culture was transformed into mass culture (Blake, 2). The fundamental distinction between mass-culture and popular culture is established, then; mass-culture would be popular culture when its consumption becomes massive.

Although this distinction is reduced just to the terms “privatization”, “standardization” and “population’s passivity”, which might seem unsatisfactory seeing the complexity of the matter, it is a better approach than Bowen’s, since he does not explain what made American popular culture become mass culture.

Running a study dealing with the progression of American’s leisure time, considering its function in American cultural transition, is difficult. Scholars differ among themselves in what to consider leisure time or not. A study run by Modi (2012), states that leisure time equates cultural time. He justifies his position by quoting De Grazia (1964); “You tell me your leisure, I shall tell your culture”. (3) According to the cultural approach taken in this paper, it is logical to believe that different populations with different cultures and folkways will differ one from the other given their possibilities for leisure time.

However, other scholars claim that the concept of leisure time belongs to a socio-logical research area rather than a cultural one. Modi, (2012) then, labors a definition of leisure time from a socio-logical perspective: “[...] leisure is a structural aspect of any society and its nature is determined largely by the structure and nature of that society” (Modi, 4). It is true that the social structure may condition the leisure time of its community. Nonetheless, it would seem plausible that culture conditioned leisure-time together with such social structural change. For instance, according to Inglehart et Baker’s (2000) and Schiller’s (1976) perspectives, if the social structure of a nation changes as a consequence of a reconstruction process, such as a change of regime, its culture will be inevitably reshaped, too. Therefore, it could be argued that it is impossible to think about the evolution of leisure time in a community specifically due to socio-logical reasons without considering the potential of the cultural aspect.

Modi (2012), in an attempt to prove leisure’s nature to be the result of both socio-logical and cultural factors, uses India as an example. India, like most nations, has experienced modernization in one way or another. An analysis of different historical periods reveals that, although suffering significant modifications, India has not entirely lost

its leisure's uniqueness. Such uniqueness is associated with its traditions, which remained untouched as its social structure underwent changes. The reason for this is that the effect of industrialization and technological progress that India experienced was hierarchically unequal. Meaning that such modernization process was highly segmented among the people. Wealthier spheres of India's society experienced it while more modest spheres could not access the benefits of it. Thus, India undeniably experienced a big sociological change, but its traditional leisure did not completely change. Hence, although India suffered crucial sociological changes, it was not enough for reforming Indian leisure, because the culture remained unaffected in the spheres of society where technological progress was not as accessible. (Modi, 5).

Leisure has empirically proven to be based in both the sociological and cultural aspects of a society, both must be altered for leisure activities to change. Thus, to properly understand what made American popular culture change and become a mass-consumption one, we must target the root of the social and cultural change which resulted in the monetization of all types of leisure, and what they aimed to achieve by doing so.

3.2 The Purpose behind Cultural Imperialism.

The relationship between markets and culture has been a subject of great interest for sociologists. The different opinions regarding the study of culture as a determining factor of the market has divided scholars. One branch thinks of the market chiefly as a cultural consequence; this is a constitutive approach. Meaning that they think of "the consumer's goods and services to be transformed into economic objects by the cultural practices and legal institutions." (Levin, 3). Thus, the commodities which the market can offer the population would be an outcome of the culture. Therefore, culture would dictate how the market works and what it offers. Other scholars think of it as a complementary approach instead. Culture is simply another variable among the many others which constitute the market. They think of the market as an economic institution, ruled by the law of supply and demand. "Markets are essentially by laws of supply and demand, populated with rational

factors, trading fungible commodities”. (Levin, 4). The cultural factor is relegated to a secondary role in the market. It is considered an independent variable serving the supply and demand cycle.

Some think the market is culture, while others believe the market contains culture. But when it comes to cultural expansion it does not matter what approach we consider, because, in fact, both approaches include culture as a component of the market. It does not matter if the culture is the principal component or it simply represents a part of the market, the existence of culture as part of the market necessarily means that the culture can be monetized. Thus, if a nation expands its culture towards another nations, those nations which now have adopted that culture will demand cultural products from its respective market. Therefore, it would be logical to think of a cultural expansion as a way of expanding a market as well, meaning that economical reasons could potentially be one of the reasons for Cultural Imperialism to occur.

American culture can be a product to promote in order to profit economically from it; so, in a way, using culture to enrich one’s economy has proven to be as useful now as it was back when England used its culture to subdue America’s population in the 18th century. Corbould (2005) when analyzing American cultural imperialism, states that foreign relationships of imperial nature are given in favor of fulfilling an economic, political or diplomatic goal, therefore, the objective of such cultural exportation towards other nations would pursue some kind of revenue, like mercantile expansion for instance, and not only cultural exchange.

But how does a cultural product go from being a reflection of one’s own culture to a product that appeals to audiences globally? Corbould (2005) and Kroes (1999) both make an interesting statement regarding the nature of cultural expansion, with respect to where to direct our attention when dealing with, or analyzing, a potential situation of modern cultural imperialism. Instead of looking for empiric evidence of a ‘cultural artifact’ (for example, an American film, disguising American propaganda) we should judge these ‘artifacts’

according to its content and the impressions that it generates in the receptors. Both Corbould and Kroes coincide: what characterizes modern cultural imperialism is not the origin of such 'cultural artifact' or if it was intended as propaganda, but rather what makes it actually a cultural production: the capability of influencing the receptors' impression in terms of foreign cultures.

Corbould uses the warlike film *Black Hawk Down* (2002) as an example. This film uses hardware from the American army and its content has a lot to do with American foreign policy. She does not consider the fact of the national army lending materials for the making of the movie, rather she would analyze the contents inside and then evaluate if the contents might influence or not popular attitudes towards foreign policies and imperialism. (Corbould, 7). Thus, according to her, what makes this film a cultural production is its potential for influencing impressions of a foreign culture in the receptor, not the fact of being intentional propaganda; in fact, some other products might not be perceived as propaganda as easily, and still impress the audience in similar ways. Kroes (1999) besides agreeing with this methodology of cultural production analysis, helps to clarify the process of cultural reception. He states that different receptors might get different experiences when consuming a cultural production, since creativeness and inventiveness, among others, may affect the reception process. (Kroes, 2). Therefore, he supports the idea of keeping a balance when it comes to analyzing a potential cultural production, having concern for different interpretations among receptors.

Furthermore, Kroes (1999) quoting Rydell, talks about what, according to him, is the best example of Americanization: cultural expansionism by privatizing leisure time of foreign nations. Rydell defines the hypothetical leisure imperialism as "veritable 'dream world' of mass consumption, a simulation through spectacle of the good life afforded by the technological advances associated with modernization" (Kroes, 3). He talks about the colonization of foreign leisure as a way to encourage and disguise American cultural intake, using the aforementioned technological advancements, which make cultural exportation easier to happen. Moreover, although he does not develop it, he states that culture, leisure

and market expansion come together, in harmony with previous statements of this paper, and in contrast with Corbould (2005), who did not consider cultural expansionism beyond the intake of foreign policies. Despite missing a formal explanation from the author, with all stated before this point, we may be able to enunciate a solid relationship among cultural, leisure and market expansion.

We established above that leisure is a crucial aspect of a specific popular culture. Analyzing a nation's leisure time can tell us a lot about the traditions and nature of its culture, according to Modi's (2012) approach of leisure time as the main component of popular culture. We also established that modernization brought the tools which made mass advertisement over the population possible, and, in consequence, the progressive abandonment of traditional values in favor of new ones that fit better the new forms of leisure offered by the mass media. This process is coined as 'colonization of leisure' or leisure colonization, by Kroes (1999) quoting Rydell.

When the leisure time of a society is colonized, the popular culture of a nation is replaced by a minimal culture, which now sees their former traditional ways of leisure being based in mass-consumption. After former traditions are left behind, it is a matter of time until the population gets completely absorbed into a minimal culture, then we can affirm that cultural conquest has succeeded. Leisure colonization facilitates cultural conquest with the help of modernization and mass advertisement, as well as the inclusion in the "New World-System" stated by Schiller (1975), since all nations which share this culture will share the same consumerist interest and market too. This cultural imposition is very different from those related to old imperialism, but chases the same purpose, indeed: to absorb a foreign nation into its own market, by influencing its political and economic systems, and achieving population passiveness by snatching their essence in the form of culture. Now that even the most basic forms of culture are dependent on consumption, the culture becomes essentially market-dependent, and the source nation can profit from it. Leisure colonization would be the most plausible procedure of Cultural Imperialism, and

so, now, we ought to research an empirical example to verify if Cultural Imperialism achieves its goals using the aforementioned procedure.

3.3 Case study: Spanish Americanization

In the previous section, we explained the process by which a nation could potentially see its popular culture become a mass-culture, via the privatization of its leisure with the use of technological developments. These technological developments improve mass communications and encourage the eradication of former local culture and traditions, with the intention of making economic-dependent activities the only leisure form of a nation. The objective of this case study is to test if the process of expansion of Cultural Imperialism explored previously is effective in reality. The point here is to determine whether the Spanish culture transitioned towards a minimal culture or not, and to analyse, in the process, if such a hypothetical cultural transition is stimulated by American culture.

As we posited above, we must begin by analysing Spanish forms of leisure, and their sociological and cultural forms, and check if, after time, if it transformed into monetized leisure with the arrival of modernization and American cultural influences. For this, we must first explore what was Spain's sociological situation by the time American modernization reached the decisive point that caused American popular culture to drive towards a minimal culture that expanded towards other nations.

According to Blake (2001) quoting Kammer, the point of no return for American popular culture would be from the thirties onwards. Thus, according to our theory, the Spanish leisure forms would start receiving American cultural stimulation via mass media and see its monetary transition happen after the thirties. Spain's situation by the thirties was fairly unstable, the decade was inaugurated by the establishment of the Second Republic in 1931. The population lived in its majority in the countryside, where media and

communications were scanty, and poverty was a common problem among the population. The economic insufficiency, in addition to the political instability, led Spain to a *coup d'état*, and consequently to Spanish Civil War, which would kick off in 1936 and last until 1939. As outcome, Spanish political, social and cultural panorama was then subjected to a fascist dictatorship which would last until late 1975 (Álvarez, 2020). The dictatorship was characterized by both a hard isolation of the nation and a censorship towards everything that could potentially be against the dictatorship regime during its first two decades. Therefore, the means by which America could have influenced Spanish leisure time to drive closer to American economic-based leisure were scarce right after the thirties, and up until the fifties.

Although these decades in Spain were not the best scenario for leisure colonialism to happen, the fascist censorship did not entirely block communications and propaganda of the United States. However, it is true that the Spanish dictatorial regime and the United States differed a lot in their respective political pillars. Spain, despite not participating in the Second World War, did support the Axis Powers, contrary to the US. Thus, to see the United States making any kind of bilateral agreement with the Spanish dictatorial regime would have degraded the image of American foreign politics. Instead, the United States found a different common ground with the Spanish fascist regime; the antipathy towards communism and the Soviet Union. The world was now involved in the Cold War conflict, between capitalist and communist blocks, which led to bilateral agreements between the United States and Spain in the Pact of Madrid in 1953. The agreements consisted in military and economic support from the United States, which was very much needed in Spain, in exchange for the permission to settle in four different military bases within Spain, and, as a consequence, the mitigation of Spanish isolation and censorship towards American propaganda (León Aguinaga, 2015).

The United States then certainly did try to promote American culture, politics and military achievements. However, the economic support received had to be, in part, destined to diverse means of American propaganda in Spain. Nevertheless, the Spanish regime

found ways to alter and deceive the propaganda, since the principal means of propaganda were written and audio-visual media, along with public relations. These attempts of propaganda were rather not as effective as they could have been, since most of them were exclusively directed towards the wealthier spheres of the Spanish society, and even those were revised and partly censored by the dictatorial regime. A good example is the series of scripts called '*Colección Estados Unidos*', financed by the USCIS. It was meant to consist of a short series of scripts which would try to spread American culture to both lower and higher spheres of the Spanish society. Nevertheless, the Spanish *Intelligentsia* managed to redirect the funds intended for those scripts, and created instead a magazine called '*Atlántico, Revista de Cultura Contemporánea*', directed, once again, only to high spheres of the Spanish society. This magazine, apart from being directed at a small portion of people, did not talk about American literature, cinema, or theatre, like it had been intended to do. Then, the American propaganda, rather than illustrating American culture like it was pretended by the United States, remained reduced to political and military aspects to the liking of the Spanish regime (León Aguinaga, 2015).

America, indeed, tried to expand its culture to Spanish society. The problem that the United States found was the hard censorship that the Spanish dictatorial regime responded with. But, although experiencing difficulties, the United States managed to introduce its presence in Spain eventually. For instance, everybody in Spain knew about the economic help provided to Spain by the American government, or the "Marshall Plan" that intended to help restore Europe from the Second World War disasters, and the common thought was that they were 'heroes' trying to hold the Soviet Union back and prevent a new war. Now that we get an idea of what American propaganda was like in relation to the Spanish situation, we can proceed to analyse if that propaganda was efficient in colonizing Spanish leisure afterwards.

The Spanish society was in its majority immersed in poverty during the forties; not the best scenario for American uprising mass-consumption culture to settle in. The technological advancements, although existing already, were not even close to be

accessible for regular population, since most of them lived in countryside areas. Regarding the available leisure forms, the dictatorship established a hard religious regime, with some resemblance to old empires where religion and the nation had equivalent powers. Religion, particularly Roman Catholicism, was mandatory in school, marked national festivities and, in general, was a big part of the popular culture (González Manrique, 2000). In fact, almost the entire population was religiously indoctrinated in a way that resembles Spanish Colonialism back in the 16th century. The cultural, leisure, and work environments had gone back to pre-industrial times after the war, and, according to Inglehart et Baker, (2000) since modernization and technological developments are the principal tools for spreading propaganda, and these were underdeveloped in Spain, old values and traditions survived.

It was not until the late fifties that the Spanish panorama started to look slightly better for the population. The censorship and oppression that the population suffered for nearly two decades started to diminish, and Spain began to gradually adopt some aspects of the European lifestyle. It is not until the reduction of labour hours that leisure started to be a real thing in Spain. González Manrique (2000), in his sociological approach of the Spanish social panorama, explains very well how leisure became a real component of Spanish' society after some time. The fact that workers had to put an insane number of hours into labour was positive for the dictatorial regime, because the more hours the population had to work means that the population would have less time to spend in their personal lives, this including leisure time. This planification of the population's labour hours perfectly fits the censorship plan of the dictatorial regime, since censorship along with excessive labour hours create the same effect of denying population's free time and consequently, free will, diminishing the chances of insurrection to happen.

By the time workers start to perceive the diminishing of their working hours the regime was already well established and stable. Then, it is comprehensible that the state did lower the population's control measures; at first, free time may have been a route for insurrections; however, after some time, no leisure could have turned out to be one of the reasons to unite and fight back, so it was only natural that the regime became more

permissive towards this. Now, technological advancements started to be more common among regular population, which created room for mass media, and, in addition, there was an improvement in the economic situation of the nation. All these while the American presence in Spain (with its propaganda) still existed in the military bases. This was an improved scenario for leisure privatization and “*Americanization*” to take place.

However, as González Manrique explains, mass culture did not replace Spain’s traditional cultural practices, rather, the two different kinds of leisure, cultural and commercial leisure, coexisted. It is true that, as he states, and in sync with this dissertation’s claim, the commercialization of leisure added to the overall technological improvements in Spain allowed popular culture to embrace mass culture (14). As we theorized, modernization was followed by a transformation of some parts of traditional, even free, leisure time into economic-based activities. However, these economic-based activities were not necessarily American. They were basically Spanish comics, literature that fit the requirements of censorship, entertainment magazines or sport practices that had been already popular in Spain before the dictatorship began. (González Manrique, 18). Thus, we can affirm that the Spanish economic leisure activities did not seem affected by the censored American propaganda. Furthermore, the mere fact of privatizing leisure was not consequence of American propaganda, since Spanish leisure forms remained inherently Spanish during the dictatorial regime and did not reflect aspects of the American culture. Hence, the transition from popular to mass culture seem to be a consequence exclusively of modernization, instead, since the American propaganda remained slightly censored and revised since the early years of the dictatorial regime, not allowing it to reach its full potential.

So, we have concluded that Spanish culture did not show any resemblance with American culture by the time the dictatorship was about to end. The thirties, as the hypothetical date of beginning of modernization, along with the conversion of popular cultures in favour of mass cultures that Blake (2001) stated quoting Kammer, was not the case in Spain; because of its hard censorship towards foreign cultures during the dictatorial

regime. However, the United States indeed tried to influence and cause such cultural conversion before the dictatorship ended, so, Kammer was partly accurate, since the American propaganda started to reach Spain even with such severe censorship.

Nevertheless, years later, American propaganda would achieve its initial purpose and lead to the eventual substitution of the already privatized Spanish leisure for American forms of leisure in its place; consequently, making the Spanish leisure to economically depend on the American market. But, in order to see this happen, we must advance a few years, from 1975 onwards, when the Spanish dictatorial regime ended and the censorship towards American propaganda was completely abolished.

The Spanish culture changes substantially when we analyse its leisure forms in modern days, in comparison to when censorship conditioned American propaganda. Dee Dockery (1998) runs a survey in Spain, in the year 1998, in which he asks some Spanish people about their knowledge regarding questions of American culture influencing the Spanish culture. His purpose is to demonstrate how much integrated the American Culture is in Spain and how local people seem to not be aware of it.

In the first part of the survey, he asked the Spanish people to give their sincere opinion about the United States as an entity. The results were neutral overall, none seem to know much about the United States apart from popular stereotypes; the biggest national economic and military power, the country of freedom, thinks of itself as the core of the world, etc. Regarding the means and amount of influence they get from the United States, that same people stated that most of its American cultural intake was based chiefly in mass media; specially TV, magazines and books. And ranked the amount of American cultural intake they received from 1 to 4 as 2.41, which the author does not consider as excessive. (Dockery, 12) So, apparently, it does not seem like the Spanish population is aware of the presence of the American culture, even though, as we will see next, that presence is evident.

Then, he asks them about different questions regarding American leisure and general culture, such as American music, cinema, fast food, TV shows, brands, sports, literature, politics, etc. The results were indeed overwhelming, especially considering the leisure forms as well as the brands and sports. For example, most of the participants knew the same or a greater number of American films than Spanish ones, and the same with TV shows. Traditional American sports, like basketball, and athletes like Michael Jordan gained popularity, and the same with the American brands, since everyone seemed to be aware of what brands like *Nike* or *Levi's* offered. The author concludes its analysis with a statement in which he confirms the unawareness of the Spanish population towards American culture along with its quick advancement and its good acceptance from the Spanish population. Nevertheless, he establishes that the American presence in Spanish culture was very relevant by the year 1998, but it did not entirely erase the essence of Spanish culture since, according to him, Spanish culture had its uniqueness untouched by the time he realized its study. (Dockery, 1998)

4. Conclusions

After exploring different sources and authors, our two main questions were answered. The first one was how did American Cultural Imperialism work. We explored how American culture evolved and became essentially a minimal and economic-based culture, especially from the 20th century onwards (due to technological advancements) and, this way, consumerism and materialism substituted for the most part what had previously been values or beliefs. It seems natural, therefore, that a culture that is money-based and money-centred, and appeals to masses (mass-culture) will eventually find a way to introduce itself into different countries, appealing to all kinds of different populations, selling culture as a manufactured product that appears perfect; selling an “American dream” through propaganda.

This leads us to the answer of our second question, what does American Cultural Imperialism (or its expansion) pursue? In the present paper, the conclusion reached was that this kind of Cultural Imperialism looked for ways in which to make its leisure activities, which are inherently its culture, appealing to foreign audiences, for one main reason: to make other countries dependent on their market and products. Exporting your culture and making it a “brand” entails more foreign money for the home-country, since your products and customers are desired and sought to be imitated and consumed.

Moreover, by exploring our case study we saw how the States exported their culture eventually, in this case into Spain, by means of propaganda and leisure. We saw that, once propaganda and manufactured cultural products reached Spain without the censorship that lasted until 1975 but especially during the forties and fifties, American culture started to be present everywhere, in music, movies, clothes and food brands, etc. Those elements appealed to audiences even if they were completely different to what the population was used to see and consume, or maybe even that was one of the main reasons that it worked,

population wanted “different” and “exotic” products. And, even though we only explored up until the last decade of the 20th century, the American cultural expansion in Spain has not stopped; in fact, some may argue that the States are now as present as ever in our culture, especially among the youth, due to social media and how fast trends can reach every part of the world.

To sum up, the concept of Imperialism is not restricted to territorial invasion, and it has now many different variants, such as Cultural Imperialism, which we explored here, that are just as important and relevant for the economy of the countries. Moreover, Cultural Imperialism may not be apparent to the population of a culturally colonized country at first, as we saw in our case study, since propaganda and products are often introduced in such a natural way that we do not stop to think how much of our own culture we are losing or how much is being substituted. Mass-culture, leisure and technological advancements go hand in hand, and this has served America to expand its culture beyond borders. One may stop and think, of what I have and am today, how much is American?

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