<u>Article – III</u>

Cultural Imperialism and the Global South

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ABSTRACT

This essay addresses the issue of Cultural Imperialism and the National Identities of the countries of the Global South. The binarism in which both of them are portrayed is the main focus of this essay. It tries to conclusively demonstrate the untenability of the same binarism by highlighting the various local worlds that empirically exist in the contemporary world. The overlap of many complex social processes and concepts have been unravelled to refute the popular and faulty understanding of the current human condition that cries out for better explication.

Keywords: *Cultural imperialism, liberal-rational dilemma, cultural universalism, cultural relativism.*

What the present world seems to be undergoing is nothing but the interplay of Seven Master Variables operating at the global level along with their respective paraphernalia with numerous permutation and combination. They are Agricultural Economy, Industrial Economy and Post-Industrial Economy and their commensurate cultural counterparts are Primordial Ties, National Identities and the Global Culture. With a few constantly decreasing exceptions, the Seventh Master Variable, Democratic State organizes the political life of humankind. The complexity and at times confusion also of the current human condition stems precisely from the interplay of these variables as they operate parallel and simultaneously in many parts of the world. Only in the developed world of the West the intersection of Post-Industrial Economy, Global Culture and Democracy is clearly and cohesively established although much variation and many problems exist even there. The rest of the world is doomed to face the consequences of the operational requirement of all seven variables put together. Due to

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precisely this ambiguity Global Culture and National Identities of the countries of the Global South have been and still are portrayed in antagonistic terms in which the loss of one is inevitably seen as the gain of the other. Their mutual incommensurability and contradictory operation in many parts of the world make the comprehension of the contemporary human condition exceedingly difficult as they function in a highly heterogenous and diversified world with little willingness, as it is clear by the mid of 2022, to abandon its distinct cultures and traditions. Isolation, indifference, resistance and adaptation all register their political presence with the hope of its due recognition by the other side. No wonder many attempts to capture the present human condition either succeeded partially or failed completely. This short and narrowly focused essay tries to address the same issue in a thematic manner. What follows, therefore, is humbly and hopefully the most comprehensive account of the same reality weaving together existing insights available on the subject and avoiding their familiar shortcomings.

Nationalism, by definition, is a cultural phenomenon and like much of the contemporary human heritage, historically speaking, it emerged in West Europe first and spread over to other countries of the West itself. The spread of nationalism in other parts of the world like Asia and Africa was the subsequent historical development propelled by the forces of Modernity exploited by Western countries to their advantage. The basic error of the current scholarship begins here. Even in England and the first convert France, it was initially confined to Europe only. It emerged, there too, due to the combination of their domestic politics and the unprecedented forces unleashed by Modernity. It required some time to crystalize there. Once consolidated in the Parental Home it came in a position to be emulated by the others. That is why even the United States is a darling child of modernity, not its mother. Mercantilism, Colonialism, Race, and Imperialism all in one form of a combination or the other imposed modernity on the rest of the world and nationalism emerged as a reaction and unintended consequence of this imposition. Had there been no West-East encounter the trajectory of the East or Global South would be radically different from the one it turned out to be in the Modern World History. It was natural and emulation in the West and the outcome of blatant imposition on the Rest. This is precisely the reason why the same phenomenon has yielded strikingly different outcomes as the world later witnessed and the process is likely to persist in the long run as well.

In a not-so-familiar essay, John Plamentaz specifies conditions under which nationalism is likely to flourish. Nationalism, according to him, is the weapon of the culturally disadvantaged. It grows where the people somehow become convinced that their values and cultures are being threatened either by another superior culture or by some other political threat. Political sociology of international politics sufficiently provides the aforementioned background condition for nationalism to flourish. Since the family of nations is moving or aspires to move in the same worldly direction of material progress, some are inevitably in a more advantageous position than others. Huge disparity among

the nations of the world is the condition of primary importance for nationalism to emerge.

Plamenatz classifies nationalism into two types: Western and Eastern. In the case of the West, nationalism emerged from the feeling of some scarcity. Scarcity lies in the standards that were likely to and did prevail all over the world in the ninetieth and twentieth centuries. But West was culturally equipped to overcome those deficiencies. As pointed out by Plamenatz "the Germans and the Italians, when they first became strongly nationalist, were already, by reference to standards they shared with the nation with whom they compared themselves, well equipped culturally ... Their most urgent need, so it seemed to them, was to acquire national states of their own, rather than to acquire the ideas and skills needed to run such a state, for they possessed them already in large measure" (Plamenatz, 1989).

Eastern nationalism is fundamentally different in character. It is drawn through the process of diffusion into the civilization that is alien to it. Eastern nationalisms are to survive in a world, whose models and standards have already been shaped by the West Europeans. There is a growing awareness among the people of Asia, Africa and Latin America that their cultures are not well equipped to meet to standards of civilization they are drawn in. Therefore, they have to revitalize their cultures in order to survive, excel and flourish in that civilization. In his words "We have also the nationalism of peoples recently drawn into civilization hitherto alien to them, and whose ancestral cultures are not adapted to success and excellence by these cosmopolitan and increasingly dominant standards. This is the nationalism of people who feel the need to transform themselves, and in doing so to raise themselves; of people's who come to be called backward and who would not be nationalist of this kind unless they both recognized this backwardness and wanted to overcome it." (Plamenatz, 1989). Besides the desire to meet or surpass those standards there is a feeling that these standards have come from an alien culture. Whether it is diffusion or imposition or both it certainly leads to a baffling paradox.

This predicament unfolds itself firstly in the need to create new identities that are in consonance with cosmopolitan standards. Due to the awareness of the fact that their ancient cultural heritage obstructs their development, they have to either change it or transcend it. At the same time, the same cultural legacy is seen as necessary to retain their distinct national character. They are faced with two choices: imitation and hostility. Imitation is necessary to meet the standards of progress set by the alien culture. Hostility is required to prove their own equality or in some cases superiority over the dominant standards. "The attempt is deeply contradictory. It is both imitative and hostile to the models it imitates. It is imitative in that it accepts the value of the standards set by the alien culture. It has involved two rejections, both of them ambivalent: the rejection of the alien intruder and dominator who is to be imitated and

surpassed by his own standards, and the rejection of ancestral ways which are seen as obstacles to progress and yet also cherished as marks of identity." (Plamenatz, 1989). Dilemma particularly assumes a politically charged form in an increasingly democratic set-up where the choice becomes either the conventional identity or the modern progress. It is precisely this binarism that colors human thinking in many parts of the world including enlightened ones. We are now in a position to move to the next issue of Cultural Imperialism.

According to Iris Marion Young "cultural imperialism involves the universalization of a dominant group's experience and culture, and its establishment as the norm, some groups have exclusive or primary access to ... the means of interpretation and communication in a society. As a consequence, the dominant cultural products of the society, that is, those most widely disseminated, express the experience, values, goals, and achievements of the groups. Often without noticing they do so, the dominant groups project their own experience as representative of humanity." (Young, 1990).

Another useful definition of cultural imperialism has been provided by John Tomlinson. According to him, "the term cultural imperialism refers most broadly to the exercise of domination in cultural relationships in which the values, practices, and meanings of a powerful foreign culture are imposed upon one or more native cultures. In this broad sense, cultural imperialism could be used to describe examples of the enforced adoption of the cultural habits and customs of actual imperial occupying power from antiquity down to nineteenth and twentieth-century European colonialism" (Tomlinson, 1999).

Cultural domination is the sine-qua-non of cultural imperialism. It has been used (and sometimes misused) in a variety of ways with several serious stakes on each side. John Tomlinson, for instance, points out that "the issue of language dominance and the threat to linguistic diversity opens out to the broader issue of cultural imperialism, the idea that a global culture is in one way or another liable to be a hegemonic culture. This pessimistic construction of the idea of global culture has been the more prominent one in the late twentieth century." (Tomlinson, 1999). There is another school of thought that associate it with the growing consumerism of Western and more particularly American products. Jonathan Friedman's writings are clearly on these lines. As noted by him cultural imperialism is "an aspect of the hierarchical nature of imperialism, that is the increasing hegemony of particular central cultures, the diffusion of American values, consumer goods and lifestyles." (Friedman, 1994). Next on the list are those who openly praise cultural imperialism. David Rothkopf and M. Waters are the names, who are most associated with this school. In Rothkopf's words "American culture is an amalgam of influences and approaches from around the world ... The United States should not hesitate to promote its values. In an effort to be polite or political, Americans should not deny the fact that of all the nations in the history of the world, theirs is the most just, the most tolerant, the most willing to constantly reassess and improve itself,

and the best model for the future … If Americans now live in a world in which ideas can be effectively exported and media delivery systems are powerful, they must recognize that the nature of those ideas and the control of those systems are matters with which they should be deeply concerned" (Rothkopf, 1997).

Despite being recognized under International Law, the state ceases to be the soul object of political reference in a densely connected world. As a natural corollary of this development National also ceases to be the opposite of the Global. Quick and intensive connectivity enabled by the revolution in transportation and communication highlighted the significance of the local. The porosity of state borders and omnipresent media made the production and presentation of locality at a global scale an unignorable development of the late twentieth and first quarter of the twenty-first century. As noted by James Rosenau "localisation involves processes wherein connections within countries are either reduced to, preserved by, or confined to existing or smaller jurisdictions, preferably within subnational or eve sub-provincial spaces but not excluding national spaces." (Rosenau, 2003). Local people are those whose existence primarily depends on or is tied to territory. Their politics, economics and most importantly their identity are heavily shaped by local territorial conditions. As Rosenau observes "for them place and rootedness are as important as ever. Their very identity is tied to place, and they cannot conceive of living anywhere else, for they are dependent on a piece of ground for their livelihood and on a particular culture and language for their sense of well-being." (Rosenau, 2003). Caution, however, needs to be maintained while thinking about the local people. Local worlds are dynamic entities even if the pace of change is relatively slow there. They cannot be treated as constant. "They do undergo transformations. Variations occur in the way globalizing dynamics impinge upon their processes and structures." (Rosenau, 2003). Despite all magnitude, intensity, velocity and penetration capacity of globalisation, a large part of humanity still resides in the local world although the shrinkage of this space is also beyond dispute. Not being a monolith, like culture and identity themselves, huge inner variation defies its coherent and consistent articulation. For the sake of convenience and at the risk of over-simplification, an attempt can be made to classify the local world under the following categories.

Insular Locals

The world of Insular locals is largely unaffected by, if not completely isolated from, the dynamics of globalisation. They are found in rural and semi-urban areas where the impact of globalisation is yet to be felt. The world of Insular Locals in some ways highlights the limitations of globalisation. They are mired in the remotest areas of the world that are yet to be properly connected with the rest of the globalized world. It, however, needs to be mentioned that the space occupied by Insular Locals is substantially shrinking day by day and the day is not far when their space may evaporate completely. As pointed out by James Rosenau "with the possible exception of peasants

in remote rural areas of the developing world-and even these exceptions are increasingly rare-the ranks of the Insular Locals are diminishing ... Some people are still much less affected by global forces-still much more authentically local-than others and it is these less globally touched who are treated here as Insular Locals" (Rosenau, 2005).

Face-to-face community life with extremely limited geographical mobility characterizes the life of Insular Locals. The neighborhood is their society; family is their centre; nearby temple, mosque or church is their heaven; local schools are the place of their learning; job in a proximate area is their livelihood; the small market is the place of their shopping and socialization. They are easily located and often directly contacted. Their addresses are fixed and show little mobility. Life is simple. Culture is relatively "pure." Social bonds are tight. Families and even joint families are intact. People usually recognize each other by face. Horizons are limited. Mobility is infrequent. Outside global influences are irrelevant. Eating, clothing and living patterns are old. They are perfect or near so an example of the old form of community life. Community means in most cases face-to-face small community occupying a relatively short piece of land.

Insular Locals are largely immune from the influences of global culture. The main attributes of global culture like pop music, the internet, McDonald's, global standardization, global sports, consumerism and so forth are alien things for Insular Locals. The only thing that keeps them informed about the outside world is either radio or TV, a percentage of which is increasing even in the remotest areas of the world. Their lives are indeed a little more complicated than depicted here, but it is far simpler than that of those who either have become or are increasingly becoming globalized. As pointed out by Rosenau "for Insular Locals the immediate community traces the limits of their horizons. Beyond the horizons little is considered salient. Their lives are inextricably tied up with and fully sustained by events and trends in the community, and their orientations towards developments elsewhere in the world are minimal, if they exist at all" (Rosenau, 2003).

The world of Resistant Locals

Globalisation has not remained unchallenged in contemporary world history. It causes a lot of discontent and faces a lot of resistance ranging from the nonviolent to violent. Resistant Locals are those who resist globalisation. Unlike Insular Locals, Resistant Locals are aware of the globalizing dynamics operating in the world. Nor are they isolated from the process of globalisation. Its influence is also familiar to them. But they are somehow dissatisfied with the consequences of globalisation and perceive that resistance is where their interests lie. Who are Resistant locals? According to James Rosenau "diverse types of people reside in this world. Workers are threatened by a loss of their jobs to foreign competitors; citizens are convinced that local cultures are being overwhelmed by westernisation and its corollary, Americanisation and thus fearful that

globalising dynamics are generating an undesirable degree of homogeneity, environmentalists worry that rapid industrialisation in the developing world will undermine the Eco balance of their small regiment of the developed world, arch-conservatives who decry the movement of immigrants into their community; intellectuals preoccupied with the negative effects of communication technologies for social and political life; social democrats concerned that neoclassical economic policies underlying globalisation are widening the gap between the rich and the poor-these are among the more conspicuous individuals who seek to preserve the meaning of local space by resisting the encroachment of global forces. Whatever their particular concerns, however, they tend to share a conviction that globalisation has led to a life in which the nearby is treated with contempt" (Rosenau, 2003).

Resistant Locals exhibit strong adherence to local values and affiliations. Though fully aware of the dynamics of globalisation (due to which they tend to resist it) they are not very keen to participate in it or to become a vehicle for it. On the contrary, they view globalisation in general and the consequent emergence of global culture in particular with suspicious eyes. Values and ideas, glamour and phantasmagoria associated with global culture are things to be disdained by the Resistant Locals. Their attachment to local traditions and distinct way of life does not permit them to get swayed by the enormous attraction of global culture. Their resistance to globalisation takes a variety of forms. Two are worth mentioning. Firstly, Resistant Locals particularly from modest economic backgrounds tend to organize their resistance to globalisation at the local level. They confine their activities and express their worries at the local level. Signing petitions, participating in protest marches, attending rallies and in some extreme cases damaging multinational-corporate-owned property are some of their favorite tricks. Secondly, there are those who oppose globalisation at the global level. Elites, activists and politically and socially aware people take a keen interest in organizing their resistance to the dynamics of globalisation at the global level. They tend to contact like-minded people all over the world and try to bear pressure on the dynamics of globalisation (or at least parts thereof) which they find unacceptable. Internet is the main tool of Resistant Locals. It is through internet dense networking is undertaken among like-minded people all over the world. Several nongovernmental organisations also play their role in resisting globalisation. Many NGOs, working in environmental, social and financial sectors, highlight the unevenness of globalizing dynamics. They actively keep their respective constituencies informed about the harms and other undesirable or unacceptable social effects of globalisation. "Thus, it is not far–fetched to describe the world of Resistant Locals as crisscrossed by a vast array of transnational networks that are functionally equivalent to the conferences and airport gatherings where those in the global world converge to frame their strategies, strike their bargains and implement their policies." (Rosenau, 2003). Rosenau further comments "for some people the inclination to resist stems not so much from opposition to the consequences

of globalizing dynamics as from a valuing of the diversity embedded in cultural differences. Such persons are likely to favor localizing processes because they serve the goal of warding off uniformities fostered by the distant proximities and thereby sustain the aesthetic and intellectual pleasures to be derived from the preservation of differences among communities and cultures" (Rosenau, 2003).

Exclusionary Locals

Exclusionary locals are more hostile to globalisation than their Resistant counterparts. Exclusionary Locals are different from Insular Locals in the sense that they are aware of the dynamics of globalisation and their world is penetrated by globalisation. Nor do they act like Resistant Locals who try to minimize the perceived bad consequences of globalisation. Exclusionary Locals prefer to take a firmer stand against globalisation. As observed by James Rosenau "the Exclusionary locals are characterized by an inclination to retreat from the globalizing tide as the latter becomes more encroaching and to do so by withdrawing to their intellectual haven or emotional (usually ethnic) heritage. Those who retreat … tend to see themselves as members of a counterculture in which localism is viewed as a solution to multifaceted challenges, as a place where anti-globalisation, anti-development, ant-modernity, anti-science, only small-is-beautiful come together in an island politics-seeking liberated zones outside the system, enclaves that provide shelter from the storm, usually in the hope that the system will somehow atrophy or collapse." (Rosenau,2003:). Huntington's thesis of Clash of Civilizations eloquently captures this portion of the human condition which is large enough to make the world look like such; clashing on civilizational lines.

A large part of Exclusionary Locals oppose globalisation for emotional reasons. They are so touchy about their identity that they perceive globalisation and more particularly global culture as a threat to it. So only they tend to take asylum in ethnicity, nationality, language, religion or other heritage that can provide emotional and psychological security to them. It is not an exaggeration to comment that most of the ethnic revival witnessed during the Post-Cold War world is stemming from this psychic tendency/necessity of these people. There are others who are equally loyal to their traditional way of living. But they are not in favor of isolating themselves from the rest of the world. Exclusionary locals, however, take a different line of thinking and prefer to take a different course of action vis-à-vis globalizing dynamics of the world. They seem to believe that their traditional culture is not a counter-attack on globalisation. Their sheer attachment to their traditional way of living is enough to make them feel and feel with conviction that theirs is the only culture that can save them from ever intruding globalizing dynamics.

The traditional culture of Exclusionary Locals is much more than the way of living. It is a source of social and psychological comfort and perpetuates their identity that is being

increasingly perceived as threatened. It is not that Exclusionary Locals were always immune from external influences or they exemplified the notion of culture as a self-containing whole. Most, if not all of them, did display quite openness to the external world in earlier times. The present world as uncertain and unpredictable as it is (to which globalisation is no exception) causes much of their sudden closeness towards the outside world. It is worth mentioning that most Exclusionary Locals reside in post-colonial states that are struggling with all sorts of problems within their domestic jurisdiction. It is this already precarious situation that globalisation exacerbates that causes if not justifies their effort to immunize themselves from the cultural influences of the outside world.

Exclusionary Locals oppose globalisation on ethnic lines. Ethnicity is taken in the broadest possible sense of the term. It refers to the "deeply felt bonds of kinship with unknown others of the same background and history … ethnic, linguistic, religious, national, cultural, tribal, and other historical bonds, some of which are occasionally posited as primordial but all of which are seen as linking people to an idea of who they are and with whom they share deep commonalities." (Rosenau, 2003). This vast and sometimes contradictory notion of ethnicity is deployed just to make the point that nationalism can cause exclusionary localism as much as tribal orientations of people do. Ethnic ties of Exclusionary Locals serve as the safeguard through which perceived assault of cultural globalisation is sought to be countered, resisted, minimized and if possible, bypassed. The current takeover of Afghanistan by the Taliban immediately comes to mind.

Nationalist resistance to globalisation traverses through several trajectories. For them, globalisation is so intruding phenomenon that is to be always contested. They arbitrarily draw ethnic and other social boundaries to generate we feeling so necessary for contesting globalisation. Religion is used for this purpose. Religious values and the threat stemming from the emergence of global culture to them are invoked. Muslim Jihadis and right-wing nationalists in different parts of the world are the most glaring illustrations. Primordial identities are invigorated to resist global culture. Networking with the like-minded people is undertaken. Cultural purity is evoked. History is glorified. The present is disdained. The future is depicted as bleak. Enormous effort is devoted to convince the masses that global culture is threatening their long-cherished traditions and values. Things are caricatured in binary terms. Nationalist sentiments are overemphasized. "Aliens" are demonized. Research is undertaken to demonstrate the adverse consequences of globalization. Despite being aware of the fact that costs of isolation are high in an interdependent world, connection with the rest of the world is discouraged. Even if the fellow citizens of Exclusionary Locals are tempted to exploit the fruits of globalisation they are constantly reminded of their traditional values. This is how gigantic resistance to globalisation is undertaken.

Affirmative Locals

Affirmative Locals welcome globalisation. They substantially differ from their Insular, Resistant and Exclusionary counterparts. They neither resist nor retreat from the process of globalisation. They perceive globalisation as a welcome development in its own right. They tend to participate actively in the dynamics of globalisation. They want to exploit the benefits of globalisation. They tend to travel frequently. They are not opposed to consumption patterns brought to their home by globalisation. They are not hesitant to work in Multinational Corporation for their livelihood. They watch foreign T.V. programs, particularly American and European ones. They can be seen working on the internet. They are not opposed to speaking in English. Without questioning their fundamental values and orientation they buttress the dynamics of globalisation. As pointed out by James Rosenau "in other words, Affirmative Locals are not inclined to contest the consequences of globalisation. Other things being equal, they simply accept that the world has shrunk, and in so doing, they see this shrinkage as offering opportunities to enrich their own local ways without undue compromises." (Rosenau, 2003). This vast section of humanity seeks ideational asylum in Francis Fukuyama's thesis of the 'End of History.'

Affirmative locals display openness to global culture. They are not opposed to what Benjamin Barber referred to as McWorld. They tend to spend their leisure time in McDonald's, Disney Parks, and watching global sports. Their lifestyle resembles that of the global elite. Most of them, particularly their children, aspire for global elite status. They tend to ape the lifestyle associated with the global elite. In fact, some parts of this lifestyle have already become the daily routine of Affirmative Locals. For example, visiting McDonald's is the status symbol for many Affirmative Locals. Another illustration of this will be the popularity of cricket in India or South Asia. Cricket means different things to different people. It came to India from England during colonial times. Since then, the game has become so popular in the country as to justify being labelled as the national game (although it has not been declared officially). Soccer, T-shirts, Tennis, Olympics, Jeans and so forth are some of the cultural attributes of the West that have been readily accepted by Affirmative Locals throughout the world. Elites of Affirmative Locals deliberately facilitate the percolation of global culture down to the masses in their constituencies. Elites of this section try to bring their insular counterparts into the mainstream of globalisation. They pay attention to the legitimate concerns of Insular Local and tend to undertake the politics of reform so that benefits of globalisation can reach these communities without undermining the fundamental texture of the traditional life they fondly cherish. They tend to "harness globalisation on behalf of local citizens movements and alternative institutions (that) are springing of all over the world to meet basic economic needs, to preserve local traditions, religious life,

cultural life, biological species and other treasures of the natural world, and to struggle for human dignity." (Rosenau, 2003). Thus conceived the issue of national identity and global culture dissolves into the famous debate of universalism versus particularism, cosmopolitanism versus communitarianism and absolutism versus relativism. Detailed critical examination of this debate is unwarranted here. Relevant points of this debate will be discussed here that are pertinent to the issue of Global Culture and National Identity.

At the heart of universalism is the idea of some fundamental and unchangeable human nature that characterize humans as humans. "That human nature consists of stable and predictable passions and dispositions, instincts and emotions, all of which can be studied" is how it is being understood in the circle of philosophers and political theorists. (Benhabib, 2002). This view is emblematic of modernity and found its most systematic articulation in the works of none other than the father of modern philosophy Rene Descartes. He sought to establish philosophy on the firm foundation of reason and rationality. His task in his words was to seek an "Archimedes so that he might draw the terrestrial globe out of its place and transport it elsewhere; demanded only that one point should be fixed and immoveable; in the same way, I shall have the right to conceive high hopes if I am happy enough to discover one thing only which is certain and indubitable." (Descartes quoted in Bernstein, 1983). His quest for some universally applicable reason and standards led to the principle "that we should not rely on unfounded opinions, prejudices, tradition, or external authority, but only authority of reason itself." (Bernstein, 1983:). No doubt, many Cartesian philosophical assertions have been invalidated since the time they were postulated but Cartesian Anxiety for a firm and universal base of knowledge continues to haunt Western philosophical thinking till the present times.

Universalism serves as a justificatory strategy in contemporary philosophical debates. The normative content of rationality is often justified in the name of universalism. As noted by Seyla Benhabib "impartiality, objectivity, intersubjective verification of results, and data, consistency of belief, and self-reflexivity minimally define this normative content." (Benhabib, 2002). Universalism in this scheme of things postulates that rationality is universally applicable. Social phenomena if approached rationally will yield similar conclusions. The entire social universe can be and should be explicated in terms of reason. Rational methods should be deployed to comprehend the social world. Humans are guided by a single universally applicable reason irrespective of their differences. Same rational principles provide guidelines for human action. All people behave in a similar manner under the same conditions. As pointed out by Ernest Gellner "the inherently idiosyncratic has no place in a corpus of knowledge. Unsymmetrical idiosyncratic explanations are worthless-they are not explanations ... Ungeneralisable explanations are useless for a practical and cumulative body of knowledge. If like conditions did not produce like effects, then the experimental accumulation of

knowledge would have no point and would not be feasible." (Gellner, 1984). It is generally referred to as epistemological universalism.

Particularly important in this context is social and cultural universalism. As noted by Ernest Gellner "in our actual and shared world, diverse cultures, though not sharing their beliefs, nevertheless seem to have little trouble in communicating with each other. The world contains many communities, but they visibly inhabit the same world and compete within it. Some are cognitively stagnant, and a few are even regressive, some, on the other hand, possess enormous and indeed growing cognitive wealth ... its implementation leads to a very powerful technology. There is a near-universal consensus about this ... those who do not possess this knowledge and technology endeavour to emulate and acquire it." (Gellner, 1984). It indicates at least two things that are relevant for the purposes of this essay. Firstly, it connotes certain norms and cultural standards are operating on the global plane. Though they might have originated in Western and developed countries of the world, they, by now, have become or becoming increasingly universal in the sense that adherence to them has become almost necessary. Any deviance from them leads either to isolation or premodern status. These so-called universal standards are seen as the models to be emulated. Secondly, many cultures find them increasingly difficult to emulate them. They either do not have the necessary technology (in the broader sense of the term) to emulate them or even if emulated they present a threat to a certain way of life in many communities. It is in this sense humanity is deeply divided among haves and have-nots. Ali Mazrui confirms this point that "there is the gap in ... power between North and South and the cultural foundations that underlie it." (Mazrui, 1990). It is in this sense there is something that can be characterized as Southern culture distinguishable from Western culture. It is this cultural divide between North and South that causes most of the problems confronted by the contemporary world.

Relativist thinking operates in opposite direction. "In its strongest form, relativism is the basic conviction that when we turn to the examination of those concepts that philosophers have taken to be the most fundamental whether it is the concept of rationality, truth, reality, right, the good, or norms we are forced to recognise that in the final analysis all such concepts must be understood as relative to a specific conceptual scheme, theoretical framework, paradigm, form of life, society, or culture." (Bernstien, 1983). While relativism stems from a variety of sources like romantic, scientific and anti-epistemological, and takes a variety of forms such as moral, conceptual, perceptual, and relativism of truth and reason, here the focus will be on cultural relativism.

Cultural relativism rejects the idea that "all people at all times and in all cultures could be brought to agree on the assessment of meaningfulness, existence, goodness (moral worth) and beauty (aesthetic value) of relevant entities." (Harre and Krausz, 1995).

Cultural relativists argue that "no such agreement is possible" and different cultures do not lend easy credence to some universal evaluative standards. They are to be judged on their terms. To put it more affirmatively cultural "relativism is often defined for a popular audience in the thesis that meaning, truth and value are relative to culture, that is each culture has its own unique system of meaning, repertoire of truth and criteria of value." (Harre and Krausz, 1995). Cultural relativism relies on the assumption that various elements constitute the culture of a community. These elements differ significantly from one culture to another. They mean different things to different people. Spoken languages, sense of right and wrong, identities and affiliations, customs and rituals, aspiration and practices, values and morals, emotions and their expression, rationality and wisdom, behavioral norms and ideas: all these are culturally filtered. No two cultures overlap on these issues beyond the point. They are culture-specific. It is an error to apply elements of one culture to another. As pointed out by Harre and Krausz cultural "relativism depends heavily on the thesis of the radical diversity of cultures … There are various elements that go to make up a culture. Each element, which might be alleged to vary from culture to culture, is tied in with certain aspects of everyday life … there are diverse ways of experiencing the world, and many diverse symbolic systems … on which so much emphasis has been placed." (Harre and Krausz, 1995).

What implications does the issue of universalism and particularism have in the context of global culture and national identities of the global south? The nation-state is a local unit in the context of globalisation and globalisation is a master narrative operating on the global scale bringing with it attendant global ethics and morality. National cultures and global cultures stand or are perceived to stand in direct contradiction with each other. As pointed out by Mike Featherstone "one of the problems in attempting to formulate a theory of globalisation is of adopting a totalising logic and assuming some master process of global integration is underway which is making the world more unified and homogenous. From this perspective … the power of the flows of information, finance and commodities, means that local cultures inevitably give way." (Featherstone, 2003). That global culture is a threat to local national cultures of the world is what is at stake in the debate between universalism (represented by the global culture) and particularism (represented by national cultures). The very usage of the term culture in the singular in the context of globalisation and plural in reference to national indicates the direction of homogenization caused by the former leading to the evaporation of the latter. Of relevance for this article is the fact that the notion of locality inherently involves some kind of nostalgia and mythical security. It begins with some "good old days" one has left behind or in the sense of some integrated organic community of perfect coherence and order that provided some sort of mythical security in the early days. Past in this sense is inherently virtuous, more moral and emotionally fulfilling. Present, on the other hand, does not promise to deliver what the past provided in amplitude. Since homelessness has increased in modern times because more and more

people work and live far away from the place of their parentage, this feeling is more permanent in modernity. As pointed out by Featherstone "nostalgia, or the loss of a sense of home, is a potent sentiment in the modern world, particularly for those groups who are ambivalent about modernity and retain the strong image of the alleged greater integration and simplicity of a more integrated culture in the past." (Featherstone, 2003). It is, therefore, necessary to maintain some caution while speaking or listening to some glorified version of the locality of a perfect social and moral order which is being threatened by the emergence of global culture. "There are problems with establishing the extent to which localities were integrated in the past. We have to be aware of … those who make such pronouncements and that they might be painting a nostalgic and over-unified picture. It is also important that we do not operate with the view that localities can change only through the working out of a one-way modernisation process entailing the eclipse of community and the local culture." (Featherstone, 2003). Implied in the notion of locality is the imagination of some sort of integrated moral community based on face-to-face interaction supposedly unpolluted by external influences. It is fondly believed that in such a small face-to-face social setting the social and emotional bonds between individuals will be more intense and daily interaction will generate some sort of common knowledge reducing the chance of misunderstanding. It is also believed that "the regularity and frequency of contacts with a group of significant others … are held to sustain a common culture." (Featherstone, 2003). These kinds of communities either never existed or even if they existed deep back in history, their decline cannot be attributed to globalisation. To defend globalisation more vociferously, globalisation, as it is understood today is far more recent vintage. It cannot be held responsible beyond the point of destroying which either existed a long time back in history or was empirically nonexistent. Even if fairy tales of pure moral and cultural communities hold some water, in recent times their decline is caused by modernisation, a process different from globalisation. The essential point to be made in this regard is that many complex social processes overlap with each other and consequently making the Global Culture and National Identity Binarism almost natural. Whereas the closer and more open enquiry of the cultural ontology of the contemporary world conclusively renders Binarism untenable.

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