Invading New Markets: Analyzing a cartoon

(Model answer)

The caption of the cartoon reads “Invading new markets” – which is its topic and which is what we see: a Third World country (perhaps a tropical island) is being invaded.

The invaders, however, are no regular soldiers. Instead, they are figures taken from Walt Disney’s comic world: the soldiers are Goofys commanded by Donald Duck, and (in the foreground) a smiling Mickey Mouse with his gun. He and the soldiers are driving away a couple of natives, who are holding their arms above their heads in surrender. This alone would be a strong sign that it is the U.S. economy that is spreading its massive influence across the world, even to remote islands. But there is more evidence of the invaders being Americans. The uniforms, the first plane and all the warships bear logos of big American companies: Nike, Texaco, Shell, McDonald’s and Motorola. In the background a group of Goofy soldiers are setting up a Microsoft flag, a scene reminiscent of the famous photograph of a group of soldiers at Iwo Jima.

Instead of regular bombs and ammunition, people are being attacked with television sets that are dropped from airplanes, and tins of coke are shot at them from a warship at sea. This looks more harmless than an attack with real bombs, but the fact that there is even a dead man lying on the ground emphasizes American ruthlessness and aggression.

To my mind, the cartoon is about two things: first, modern invasions do not necessarily have to be fought with weapons, tanks, warships or soldiers. America’s wars today are mainly fought by its big companies, and the battlegrounds are the international markets. And secondly, America invades the world with its lifestyle and culture, without really caring about how the rest of the world feels about it. The terrified faces of the natives obviously do not stop the Goofy soldiers from carrying out their orders.

To a point, I agree with the cartoonist: The US has swept the globe with its products, and its corporate giants do dominate the financial and economic world. But other industrialized countries are joining in – amongst them Germany.

It is also true that American culture has had a huge influence across the world since World War II, often wiping out a lot of traditional habits and customs. But obviously, there is something very appealing about American food, clothes, music or films, so their success cannot be explained by the use of force.