

**CRITIQUE and APPLICATION of**  
**COMMUNICATION**  
**THEORIES**

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## CHAPTER TWO

### Theorizing Cultural Development vis-à-vis Cultural Imperialism Theory \*

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#### **Introduction**

Theories are the benchmarks upon which new and novel ideas could be tested. They also offer empirical support to such novel ideas. A theory has also been defined as a set of interrelated concepts, definitions, and statements that present a systematic view of a phenomenon by specifying relationships among the concepts with the purpose of explaining the phenomenon (Kerlinger, 1973 cited in White, 2001). This is the primary reason two theories are discussed below to help focus the current analysis and draw readers to the existence of the possibilities which the present effort holds.

First of the theories that will support some of the arguments raised in this investigation is the Technological Determinism Theory by McLuhan (1964). Innis (1950) first used the term “technological determinism” before McLuhan elaborated on it and built a theory out of it. According to Innis (1950), the nature of media technology prevailing in a society at a given point in time greatly influences how the members of that society think and behave. DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach (1982) noted that McLuhan elaborated on Innis’s thesis and characterized television as a “cool” medium because of its capacity for rich configurations of audiovisual stimuli, which elicits high but passive audience participation. From the technological determinist’s perspective, the most important characteristic of the audience-media interface is the

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technological properties of the medium. Thus, McLuhan asserts, "The medium is the message" (DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach, 1982:184).

According to McLuhan (1964), all social, economic, political and cultural changes are based on the development and diffusion of technology. His argument in this theory is based on the need to draw the attention of media audience to the hidden effects of communications technologies, especially with regard to culture, leading to his now famous phrase "global village". This theory in Griffins (1991:289) understanding, regards our present cultural challenges as a direct result of the information explosion engineered and sustained by television, computer and the Internet. The theory, therefore, ultimately linked the historical, economic, and cultural changes in the world to the invention, development and diffusion of technology.

While some social scientists are busy trying to understand the potential impact of the nature of Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) on audiences and society, few people would accept the proposition that technology alone determines how a society encounters and responds to the media. According to DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach (1982:185), most people would reject McLuhan's claim that the content of media messages has no impact on audiences. Essentially, media theorists reject the extreme form of technological determinism put forth by McLuhan for two reasons. These reasons are summarized by DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach (1982:185) below:

Social scientists generally reject the idea that any single factor - be it technology, the economy, or chromosomes - can be the single cause of social behaviour. This distrust of single-factor theories is buttressed by theory and research developments that demonstrate the influence of both psychological and social factors on the individual's or group's encounters with the mass media. This is not to say that Innis's thesis need be rejected out of hand; most media theorists would accept the proposition that the technological characteristics of a mass medium may be one of many factors that should be taken into account.

But others like Baran (2002) see technology as more or less neutral and claim that the way people use technology is what gives it significance and meaning. Baran's school of thought accepts technology as one of the many factors that shape economic and cultural changes and concludes that technology's influence is ultimately determined by how much power it is given by the people and cultures that use it. According to Baran (2002:22):

This disagreement about the power of technology is at the heart of the controversy surrounding the new communication technologies. Are we more or less powerless in the wake of advances like the Internet, the World Wide Web, instant global

audio and visual communication? If we are at the mercy of technology, the culture that surrounds us will not be of our making, and the best we can hope to do is to make our way reasonably well in a world outside our own control. But if these technologies are indeed neutral and their power resides in how we choose to use them, we can utilize them responsively and thoughtfully to construct and maintain whatever kind of culture we want.

In his analysis of this theory in a recent study, Ekeanyanwu (2008: 115) says: The accusation leveled against new communication technologies that it is leading to cultural imperialism is both misleading and unintelligent. The power of technology is in the use to which it is put, not in its very nature. Therefore, we can apply it to suit our cultural needs; not it compelling us to follow its own dictates or the dictates of the owners of such technology as suggested by some anti-western media scholars who always argue in favour of cultural imperialism as the main result of the influence of globalization and the role of new communication technologies.

The second theory that will help argue my thesis in this chapter is the Information Diffusion theory. This theory is an offshoot of the Information Flow Theory. The theory explains how innovations are introduced and adopted by various societies. Everett Rogers (1962) cited in Baran and Davies (2003) developed this theory as an extension of Lazarsfeld's original idea of the Two-Step flow. Rogers (1962) assembled empirical data to show that when new technological innovations are introduced, they will pass through a series of stages before being widely adopted. These series of stages include:

1. Most people will become aware of them, often through the news media.
2. The innovations will be adopted by a very small group of innovators or early adopters.
3. Opinion leaders learn from the early adopters and try the innovation themselves.
4. If the opinion leaders find the innovation useful, they encourage their friends and opinion followers to adopt it.
5. After most people have adopted the innovation, a group of laggards or late adopters make the change (Baran and Davies, 2002).

The theory postulates that the media or technology has no inherent powers to cause a major and dramatic influence on society or on indigenous culture of local

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peoples. When it causes some influences, some mediating factors as stated above may have taken place. This is the major idea that influenced the adoption of this theory in this current study; and here also lies its relationship with the other theory earlier cited. The emphasis here is that globalization and ICTs for instance, cannot cause societal changes on their own especially in the area of culture without the aid of the intervening variables. These variables could come in different forms. What is important, if the arguments of the two theories discussed so far are considered, is that globalization and ICTs cannot influence indigenous cultures positively or negatively without the support of the people. If this conclusion is further analyzed, then, the argument for cultural development hypothesis to help address the indigenous cultural challenges of developing societies may have been addressed and justified.

Information Diffusion theory is a good example of the power and limitations of a middle-range theory. The theory assigns a very limited role to mass media – creating awareness of new innovations. Media content directly influences only the early adopters; others adopt innovations only after being influenced by other people, popularly called opinion leaders. This scenario further question the arguments put forward by the early mass society and magic bullet theorists, which have long been discredited in media circles. However, the arguments of cultural imperialism theorists seem to suggest that such theories have resurrected back to life to haunt cultural development theorists in the age of globalization. This is the major reason a brief overview of McLuhan's global village is instructive here. This so-called village has become a 21<sup>st</sup> century reality in the light of globalization and ICTs.

### **Overview of Literature on Global Village, ICTs and Globalization**

The world today is aptly described as a global village in which a web of information networks interconnects individuals in nearly instantaneous global communication (Singhal and Rogers, 2001). Canadian media scholar Marshal McLuhan (1964) coined the term Global Village in 1960s. He proclaimed the advent of a global village, a sort of borderless world in which communication media would transcend boundaries of nations. According to him, "Ours is a brand new world of all at oneness, time has ceased, and space has vanished. We now live in simultaneous happening." McLuhan (1964) also predicted that each new communication medium will transcend the boundaries for experience reached by earlier media and contributed to further change. He correctly sees different media working together and converging to form a global village. In the global village, information and experience would be freely available for all to share. McLuhan insists that electronic media would decentralize power and information, allowing people to live in small clusters far from urban centres while having the same level of access to information.

The global village is a world that is interconnected by Internet, World Wide Web and new communication media, which has created a more or less uniform global

culture. Singhal and Rogers (2001) argue that at least at a superficial level, large cities across the world today resemble major cities in the West in the products sold, movies shown, air conditioning, traffic problems, fast-food, taking of coca cola products, McDonalds, Reeboks and Japanese automobiles. The advent of satellite channels, global networks and Internet brought drastic changes in the media environment from 1990 onwards. New developments in communication technology have rewritten the very definition of journalism itself. The definition of news has changed from something that has just happened to something happening at the very moment you are hearing or watching it (Joseph, 2006:102).

In thinking about the future of media in the globalised world, '-push' and '-pull' are two words that capture the direction to which the media is moving. Joseph (2006:102) notes that:

Broadcasting TV is a push medium wherein select band of producers decide what content is to be created, create it and then push it down through analogue or digital channels at audience which are assumed to consist of essentially passive recipients. The web is opposite of this. It is a pull medium. Nothing comes to a user unless he/she chooses it and clicks onto it to pull it down on the computer. The asymmetry of the old media world is over turned in the net dominated new media environment.

Gradually it is discovered that the passivity of the old broadcast model may have been more due to the absence of tools and publication opportunities rather than to the intrinsic defects in human nature (Naughton, 2006). For the media it means that journalists should be offering "commentary, facts checking and inflection" on the material in the public domain acting as map makers to help people make sense of everything that is out there on the Internet. The map conceptualized and mediated the sources that they point to but the interpretation of the readers themselves (Hall, 2001). Many experts have also argued That the importance of '-word' is declining and that of visual image is ascending. The media culture that was dominant until recently by the printed word is disappearing; it is being replaced with a culture dominated by images. That was why Marshal McLuhan declared four decades ago that human beings were returning to the preliterate state in human evolution (Vilanilam, 2005).

Joseph (2006:103) also states that digitization and computerization have facilitated the process of media convergence. According to him, communication (computerized communication) is part of every medium's operation today and watertight compartmentalization of various media is a futile exercise. Digitization opened new possibilities for creation of services within and beyond the framework of traditional communication sectors. Media convergence is leading to the death of time and distance, which is in a way assisting the process of globalization by making what is global as local and what is local as global.

Herman and McChasney (1997) also note that the most important features of growth of global media in the past two decades are the consolidation and concentration of advertisement based commercial media and the parallel weakening of public broadcasting system. Media globalization is also characterized by larger cross-border flows of media output, the growth of media TNCs and the tendency towards concentration of media control and the spread and the intensification of commercialization. In the 1990s, the media started to operate across national borders and have a greater impact on national cultural systems. Media and entertainment outlays were growing faster than GDP almost everywhere in the world especially in Europe.

In his analysis of the implication of ICTs in this age of globalization, Friedman (2005) states that the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be remembered for a whole new world of globalization - a flattening of the world. He sees the whole globalized world as flat in the sense that the entire world is now a level playing field with easy exits and entrances. Joseph (2006: 101) also notes that the globalized world is entering a new phase where more people than ever before are going to have access to ICT facilities as innovators, collaborators, and even as terrorists while Friedman (2005) argues that every where one turns to, hierarchies are being challenged from below or transforming themselves from top down structures into a more horizontal and collaborative entities. This flattening process is happening at unusual speed and directly or indirectly touching a lot more people on planet at once.

It is interesting at this point to observe that McLuhan (1964) had predicted 43 years ago the emergence of this situation when he visualized a dispersed media structure "whose centres are everywhere and margins are nowhere". Today, globalization and ICTs have led to the emergence not only of a global village but also of a global family and community now sharing common values, economic cum political ideologies and socio-cultural orientations irrespective of their places of geographical provenance, race, language and socio-economic status (Ekeanyanwu, 2008).

Rothkop (1997:98) in his remarks to justify the place of ICTs to today's world states that:

Much has been written about the role of information technologies and services in this process. Today, 15 major U.S. telecommunications companies, including giants like Motorola, Loral Space & Communications, and Teledesic (a joint project of Microsoft's Bill Gates and cellular pioneer Craig McCaw), offer competing plans that will encircle the globe with a constellation of satellites and will enable anyone anywhere to communicate instantly with anyone elsewhere without an established telecommunications infrastructure on the ground

near either the sender or the recipient. Technology no doubt, is not only transforming the world; it is creating its own metaphors as well. Satellites carrying television signals now enable people on opposite sides of the globe to be exposed regularly to a wide range of cultural stimuli. Russian viewers are hooked on Latin soap operas, and Middle Eastern leaders have cited CNN as a prime source for even local news.

Sociologists have argued that the emergence of a global-culture has the capacity to bind society and individuals together. This according to Meyer *et. al.* (1997:162) could be done "by rationalized systems of (imperfectly) egalitarian justice and participatory representation, in the economy, polity, culture, and social interaction". Critics of world-society theory agree on this count in that there is no such thing as a "global civil society." Communication and transportation technology is not enough to account for the rise of cross-border advocacy groups (Keck and Sikkink 1998:32-34, 210-211), although "global governance" of major aspects of transportation and communication has been on the rise since 1850 (Murphy, 1994).

Political and social theorists and historians have noted the rise of what modernists would call "particularistic" identities as evidence against the rise of a global culture. Cox (1996:27) writes about globalization producing a "resurgent affirmation of identities," while Mazlish (1993:14) notes, "Ethnic feeling is a powerful bond," and skeptically asked, "What counterpart can there be on the global level?" Yashar (1999), cited in (<http://www.glocalforum.org>) rejects the "global culture" and "global citizenship" concepts but also finds fault with the argument that globalization has induced the proliferation of ethnic movements. In her comparison of indigenous movements in Latin America, Yashar clearly demonstrates that no aspect of globalization: cultural, economic, political, social or normative, can account for the rise of ethnic-based activism since the 1960s. Rather, globalization changes the characteristics of the states that activists face in making their claims.

Some of the most persuasive arguments against the idea of the emergence of a global culture come from Geertz (1998:107-108). He observes that the world is:

Growing more global and more divided, more thoroughly interconnected and more intricately partitioned at the same Time... All these vast connections and intricate interdependence are sometimes referred to, after cultural studies sloganeers, as the 'global village, or, after World Bank ones, as 'borderless capitalism. But as it has neither solidarity nor tradition, neither edge nor focus, and lacks all wholeness, it is a poor sort of village.

Geertz (1998:109-110) notes further:

The view of culture, a culture, this culture, as a consensus on fundamentals-shared conceptions, shared feelings, and shared values-seems hardly viable in the face of so much dispersion and disassembly. Whatever it is that defines identity in borderless capitalism and the global village it is not deep going agreements on deep going matters, but something more like the recurrence of familiar divisions, persisting arguments, standing threats, the notion that whatever else may happen, the order of difference must be somehow maintained.

Similarly, Smith (1980:171) opens his essay on global culture with what he calls the "initial problem" with the concept:

Can we speak of 'culture' in the singular? If by 'culture' is meant a collective mode of life, or a repertoire of beliefs, styles, values and symbols, then we can only speak of cultures, never just culture; for a collective mode of life, or a repertoire of beliefs, etc., presupposes different modes and repertoires in a universe of modes and repertoires. Hence, the idea of a 'global Culture' is a practical impossibility, except in interplanetary terms.

Appadurai (1996:4, 21) aptly articulates the anthropological approach to the global. He argues, "Individuals and groups seek to annex the global into their own practices of the modern," and writes about the "global modern." In his view, the central features of global culture today is the politics of the mutual effort of sameness and difference to cannibalize one another and thereby proclaim their successful hijacking of the twin enlightenment ideas of the triumphantly universal and the resiliently particular. This mutual cannibalization shows its ugly face in riots, refugee flows, state-sponsored torture, and ethnocide. Its brighter side is in the expansion of many individual horizons of hope and fantasy (Appadurai, 1996:4, 21).

The critical point is that both sides of the coin of global cultural processes are today products of the infinitely varied mutual contest of sameness and difference on a stage characterized by radical disjuncture between different sorts of global flows and the uncertain landscapes created in and through this disjuncture (Appadurai, 1996:43). Drawing on anthropological work and his own research, Portes (1997:3) proposes the term "transnational communities" to refer to cross-border networks of Immigrants that are "neither here nor there" but in both places simultaneously" (see also Portes, Guarnizo, and Landolt, 1999). Different transnational communities, however, exhibit different origins, features and problems, and certainly do not form a monolithic global class of cosmopolitan citizens.

Similarly to Portes, Friedman (1994) accepts Geertz's, Smith's and Appadurai's basic notion of cultural fragmentation, but argues that in today's world

the existence of tribal societies cannot be correctly understood without explaining how they are embedded in global networks. In his view, cultural diversity must be seen in a global context. There remains the ultimate question about the alleged rise of a global culture: What is the global language? The diffusion of Esperanto has certainly not delivered on early expectations, and the "English-as-global-language" argument seems equally far-fetched and indefensible. As Mazlish (1993:16) observes, English "is becoming a sort of *Lingua Franca* [but] there are serious limitations to the use of English as the **daily** language of a global culture." Moreover, English is being challenged as the dominant language in parts of the United States and the United Kingdom. It is also instructive to recall that the most successful world language ever, Latin, evolved into a mosaic of Romance languages after spreading in its various vulgarized forms throughout most of Western and Central Europe, Northwestern Africa and Asia Minor.

Another sound argument against English as the global language is the one by Smith (1990:185-186). He notes that rather than the emergence of a 'global' culture what we are witnessing is the emergence of 'culture areas'-Not necessarily at odds or in conflict with each other, as Huntington (1996) would have it. Thus, Spanish, Russian, Arabic, French, Kiswahili and Chinese have become the shared languages of certain groups, communities or population strata across countries located in specific regions of the world, namely, Latin America, the CIS, the Arab world, sub-Saharan Africa, East Africa, and South East Asia, respectively. Inevitably, globalization can lead to the development of indigenous languages, which is a major component of culture of any people.

Another vital point in favour of globalization and ICTs comes from the argument of the opponents of the cultural development school of thought. They note that with globalization and developments in information and communications technologies, American culture and English language will swamp their cultures and traditional industries. Such fears are unfounded, debatable and questionable. According to Cairncross (2000: 279):

Electronic media affect language in three main ways. They alter the way language is used, they create a need for a global language that will most likely be filled by English, and they influence the future of other languages. In the last case, one of the main impacts of new communications will be to lower the entry barriers to cultural industries such as television and movie-making.

Critics of the cultural imperialist argument also contend that the flow of information from the global North to the global South results in an intermingling of cultures, rather than the dominance of one culture over another. Prior to the Internet, European and Asian countries were concerned about the influence of American

television and film, believing that American popular entertainment would undermine the growth of local pop-culture. However, it was found that foreign entertainment often took a secondary place among a domestic audience, especially when language differences require the programmes to be either dubbed or subtitled. European audiences viewed American programming only when they felt that the quality of programming in their local channels was poor (See Thompson on <http://llc.edu/student/globalization.htm>).

Furthermore, the argument that cultural products impose the values of one culture on another, assumes an audience with a rather passive response to media messages. This view is erroneous with the discarding of the mass society and magic bullet theory notions. In other words, this idea assumes a "hypodermic" model effect of the media, where audiences are influenced by any media message that is communicated to them. In contrast, most research findings suggest that audiences actually have an active reading to any message - critiquing and analyzing ideological messages, and interpreting them to fit within their own cultural contexts. Studies in the Latin American countries have shown that local cultures 'interact' with foreign ones, creating a hybridization of the two, instead of a subjugation of the local culture by the foreign one. This questions the major arguments of cultural imperialism theory.

### **Why Theorizing Cultural Development Vis-À-Vis Cultural Imperialism Theory?**

Before we begin to theorize cultural development vis-à-vis cultural imperialism theory, we need to highlight the various strands of views which prompted the debate that cultural imperialism is no longer the only result of indigenous cultures and societies' interaction with alien values and people. This debate manifested itself clearly in the 21<sup>st</sup> century with the gradual reduction and in some instances, removal of traditional boundaries by globalization trends and ICTs.

Globalization and ICTs are two contemporary concepts that have been defining media/cultural related studies since the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Globalization seeks to bring all peoples of the world into one large community. It is also seen as a comprehensive term for the emergence of a global society in which economic, political, environmental, and cultural events in one part of the world quickly come to have significance and meaning for people in other parts of the world. Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), on the other hand, is the vehicle through which this objective is realized.

The cultural implication of globalization aided by ICTs in a developing society like Nigeria raises an interesting debate and also poses a challenge to 21<sup>st</sup> century scholars of media/cultural tradition. Scholars such as Hamelink (1983), Schiller (1992), Huntington (1996), and Bienefeld (2005), are of the opinion that globalization and ICTs are gradually eroding local cultural values and replacing them

with alien values while Reich (1992), Wang (1996), Wilson (1998), Zwizwai (1999) and Ekeanyanwu (2008) are of the opinion that globalization and ICTs have actually enriched local cultural values with positive foreign influences. Both sides have always provided facts to argue their cases and the controversy generated by them remains fluid.

The controversial nature of these issues cannot be isolated from their peculiar Influence, which affects peoples' lifestyles and their total way of life-culture. Technology has now created the possibility and even the likelihood of a global culture. The Internet, fax machines, satellites, and cable TV are sweeping away cultural boundaries. Global entertainment companies shape the perceptions and dreams of ordinary citizens, wherever they live. This spread of values, norms, and culture, no doubt, tends to promote western ideals of capitalism. Will local cultures, therefore, inevitably fall victim to this global "consumer" culture? Will English language, for instance, eradicate all other languages? Will consumer values Overwhelm peoples' sense of communal living and social solidarity? Or, on the contrary, will a common culture lead the way to greater shared values and political unity encapsulated in a global culture? Opinions on these questions differ and so, the problems raised by them will form the basis for theorizing cultural development vis-à-vis cultural imperialism.

### **Revisiting Cultural Imperialism Theory**

Critical theorists, according to White (2001), have suggested various phrases in reference to notions of cultural imperialism. An examination of the international communication literature will reveal several different terms such as "media imperialism" (Boyd-Barrett, 1977); "structural imperialism". (Galtung, 1979); "cultural synchronization" (Hamelink, 1983); "cultural dependency and domination" (Link, 1984; Mohammadi, 1995); "electronic colonialism" (McPhail, 1987); "communication imperialism" (Sui-Nam Lee, 1988); "ideological imperialism", and "economic imperialism"(Mattleart, 1994)- all relating to the same basic notion of cultural imperialism. Different media scholars who have at one time or the other written on the subject of cultural imperialism attribute its beginnings to different sources as well (All references cited in this paragraph are from White, 2001).

The theory of cultural imperialism was developed in the 1970s to explain the media situation as it existed at that time. The nature of media (i.e., print, radio and television), at that time, promoted a one-way, top-down transmission system from dominant country to dominated country that theoretically gave rise to a passive audience and a powerful media (Sengupta and Frith, 1997 cited in White, 2001). This situation created imbalance in the global news flow scene and cries of media/cultural imperialism/marginalization. These cries, inevitably, led to calls for a New World Information and Communication Order.

Cultural imperialism is therefore defined as “the process whereby the ownership, structure, distribution, or content of the media in any country are singly or together subject to substantial external pressures from the media interests of any other country or countries, without proportionate reciprocation of influence by the country so affected” (Boyd-Barrett, 1977, p. 117). Media/cultural imperialism could also be described as the subtle manipulation of the mass media of underdeveloped or developing countries by the developed western capitalist nations of Europe and North American, using their advanced and well-developed mass media to control the behaviour, lifestyles, morals, mores, arts, and values of the undeveloped or developing nations through the production and massive exportation of media software to the developing nations. Cultural imperialism is also the subjugation of a local culture and the imposition of an alien culture on the local culture (Ekeanyanwu, 2005:29).

Cultural imperialism became an issue in international media circles and one of the core debates in the controversy over the New World Information and Communication Order after the MacBride Commission published its findings which states that “the media of communication are cultural instruments which serve to promote or influence attitudes, motivation, foster the spread of behaviour patterns and bring about social integration” (MacBride *et al*, 1980).

### **The Main Arguments of Cultural Imperialism Theory**

After a critical analysis of the arguments put forward by most of the theorists and other scholars who have written on the subject of cultural imperialism, the major proposition could be summarized in the work of Schiller (1976). From his thinking, cultural imperialism proposes that “a society is brought into the modern world system when its dominating stratum is attracted, pressured, forced, and sometimes bribed into shaping its social institutions to correspond to, or even promote, the values and structures of the dominating centre of the system” (Schiller, 1976 cited in White, 2001). The summary of this view is that the essence of cultural imperialism is the domination by one nation by another and the environment for this is created by transnational media organizations.

Another assumption of cultural imperialism, according to White (2001:4) citing Tomlison (1991) is that:

Media play a central role in creating culture. This axiom is linked to the interchangeable use of various terms to refer to cultural imperialism. Writers who talk about "cultural imperialism" as "media imperialism," treating the two terms as synonyms, bring into question the centrality of the media in claims of cultural imperialism. This practice implies that the media have such an overwhelming role in the process referred

to as "cultural imperialism" that the word "cultural" can be interchanged with "media" from time to time. Of course, one must be careful in attributing this massive central significance to the media. To understand claims about media imperialism, one would need to examine the relationship of the media to other aspects of culture without assuming its centrality from the outset (Tomlinson, 1991).

White (2001:4) further notes that cultural imperialism theory also presumes a centralized approach to the development, diffusion and distribution of media products. "The thinking here is that all media products originate from only center nations that have devious ulterior motives of deliberately wanting to dominate the media of periphery nations. This belief is based partly on the view that no periphery country will ever be able to produce media products of its own" (White, 2001:4). How wrong such a view!

### **The Major Limitations of Cultural Imperialism Theory**

Many limitations have been identified by scholars who are opposed to the major arguments of the cultural imperialism theory. Their views (as noted in Ekeanyanwu, op.cit.) are summarized below:

1. The advocates of cultural imperialism led by Herbert Schiller developed their arguments in the 1960s and 70s when United States economic dominance in the global system seemed secure and unchallengeable. This situation has since changed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century with the emergence of other economic and political superpowers like China, Japan etc. Therefore, the unipolar power structure which cultural imperialism presumes is no longer in existence in the 21<sup>st</sup> century power relations. We now talk of multipolar power structure and relations. Unipolarism is the existence of a single super power in world politics and relations while multipolarism is the existence of multiple super powers in global politics and international relations.
2. The theory lacks explanatory power and so, needs to be advanced beyond the level of pure description (Ogan, 1988 cited in White, 2001). Beyond this, the theory is also found to be lacking in predictive powers.
3. The economic component of media imperialism may be expressed in statistics, but the cultural component is much more difficult to measure (Ogan, 1988 cited in White, 2001). This calls to question the various empirical supports this theory claims to have garnered over time.

4. The cultural imperialism theory also implies that before the arrival of US media, developing nations were enjoying cozy golden age of indigenous, authentic traditions and cultural heritage, untainted by values and orientations imposed from outside. This argument risks being patronizing to what are seen as 'weaker' nations and of romanticizing as 'Indigenous' those cultures whose traditions and heritages have been shaped by very long and brutal processes of cultural conflict, triangulation and synchronization, often involving the imposition of external values from centuries back, resulting in rich hybridities (Negus and Roman-Velasquez, 2000).
5. The theory also lacks conceptual precision (Lee, 1988 cited in White, 2001). This is the major reason for the various conflicting notions the theory has been linked with.
6. The theory does not hold true in all ramifications of the phenomenon that it attempts to explain (Sinclair, Jacka, and Cunningham, 1996 cited in White, 2001). Therefore, when related constructs are given different interpretations in related situations, then something is definitely wrong with the platform from which such interpretations are made.
7. Twenty-first century media scholars like Uche (1996) have also drawn clear and distinct lines between cultural imperialism, cultural synchronization and cultural juxtaposition. He argues that what most persons call cultural imperialism may actually be regarded as cultural synchronization. According to him, cultural imperialism means an external culture that is imposed upon another culture against its will, cultural synchronization means an external culture that is welcomed and imitated by another culture which the external eventually supersedes in an evolutionary fashion, and cultural juxtaposition means the placing together of locally produced cultural elements with the externally produced (or as the opposition and coexistence) of distinct types of cultural productivity within late capitalism. This distinction is glaringly lacking in the conceptualization of the cultural imperialism theory.
8. The cultural imperialism theory does not also acknowledge an audience's ability to process information and interpret messages differently based on their individual background, and as suggested by Individual Differences theory (Liebes & Katz, 1990 cited in White, 2001). The theory also goes against the uses and gratification model, which rightly presumes an active media audience that are able to process and interpret media messages or stimuli from their individual socio-cultural experiences and backgrounds.

9. The theory builds on mass society and magic bullet submissions which have long been discredited in media practice and scholarship. So, are we moving backward and forward or forward and backward in the development and diffusion of mass communication theories? The answer should be obvious.
10. The criteria for evaluating theories - scope, precision, testability and utility - have been used in the comparison of cultural imperialism and other macroscopic theories. These criteria have been suggested for evaluating mainly social scientific theories. However, even though cultural imperialism is considered mainly a critical theory, these criteria could still be used as cultural imperialism has been applied in social scientific research. Using these criteria, White (2001) notes the following:

Although the theory, arguably, has broad scope as it attempts to cover a lot of the phenomenon related to relationships between nations, therein lies part of the theory's shortcoming. According to Fejes (1981), the theory is almost a "pseudo-concept, something which can be used to explain everything in general about media in developing countries and hence nothing in particular" (p. 282). This is further complicated by the fact that the theory lacks precisely defined constructs and propositions which makes it highly challenging to test the theory. With these inadequacies related to precision and testability, one can infer that the theory does not have much utility either. At best, the theory is descriptive and does not have much explanatory or predictive power.

### **Advocating for a Cultural Development Theory**

The crux of this paper is to highlight the inherent weaknesses in the cultural imperialism theory so as to put forward the argument for a cultural development theory To help address developing nations' cultural needs. Another major reason is to provide developing societies (in the developing category) the framework and platform to exploit the other inherent possibilities provided by the interface between culture and communication in the era of globalization powered by sophistication in ICTs.

The first part of this has been done. The second part follows from empirical analysis of a recent study by Ekeanyanwu (2008:181) in which he notes thus:

On the aspect of the potential threat posed by globalization trends and ICT application on indigenous societies and cultures, this study has shown that the impact might be exaggerated. It is true that communication is a major carrier of culture. In other

words, the technologies of communication are potential carriers of cultural products. True also that the technologies carry with them the cultural values of their producing nations to the consumer societies. However, that these always lead to only cultural imperialism has been put to question with regard to the results of this investigation.

Situating the results of his investigation in context of the current discourse, Ekeanyanwu (op.cit.) further notes that:

Media professionals, who we have justified earlier as professionals who have direct contact with the variables under investigation, perceive the impact of globalization trends and ICT application on local cultures differently. They are of the opinion that even though media globalization through massive application of ICT in developing nations has the potential of impacting negatively on indigenous cultural development, it could also help to enrich and develop local cultural values and contents. This negates the issues raised in the cultural imperialism theory and reinforces the views of the proponents of technological determinism theory and the phenomenistic perspective to media effects.

From available literature on this subject, the western technologies carry western cultural values that are both capable of eroding as well as enriching local cultural values of developing nations like Nigeria. If so, it is therefore expected that developing societies should maximize the inherent enriching capabilities in western technologies and then try to minimize the potential threats by the way or the use to which these technologies will be put to. This may be a moral issue but if the views of media professionals are worth considering, then developing societies have little options here.

Former consumer societies that chose to fully and deeply understand the issues involved in globalization are better off today. Singapore is a recent case in point. Such societies are no longer wallowing in self-pity or afraid over their local cultural values. They are exploiting the potentials of globalization and ICTs to improve their cultures. But first, they chose to appreciate the issues globalization and ICTs raise and then go deep into them and finally see the issues as challenges that can be positively exploited. If the developing societies follow same procedure or processes adopted by Singapore, there is a likelihood of socio-cultural and economic turnaround in the developing societies.

To support this position, we are therefore, tempted to ask questions at this stage. The western educational curriculum that the developing societies have continued to implement has it not brought out the best in some individuals in the

developing societies? If it has not, why have they not discarded it a long time ago? Is the socio-political ideologies borrowed from Europe and other western societies not the same ones shaping societies in the developing world? If not, why are they still clamouring for democracy, freedom, civil liberties, capitalism etc? Are these philosophies indigenous to these developing societies?

I am sure an attempt to answer these questions and many more raised in the literature and theoretical analyses will obviously bring us to the stark reality that globalization and ICTs have not totally imperialized the values and cultures of developing nations. This is the major reason why the studies carried out by Reich (1992), Wang (1996), Wilson (1998), Zwizwai (1999), and the Pew Research Centre (2002) are cited here for further studies. The findings of these studies confirm the opinion that globalization and ICTs could actually enrich local cultural values.

Globalization trends and the application of ICTs carry with them positive values that have changed media/cultural related studies and issues. Therefore, the positive values should be further re-evaluated to make more meaning to the developing societies. Discarding aspects of one's indigenous cultural values that are no longer supportive of one's current aspirations should not be regarded as cultural imperialism. Imperialism connotes some form of force, which is not the case in this cultural displacement. The displacement or loss is as a result of interaction between the local and alien values. These values come face to face and the ones that are no longer current with contemporary ideas die naturally.

So, the disappearance or displacement of local values to more enduring foreign cultural values and norms may be leading to cultural development. There is a gradual movement from local norms to global norms especially in this era of global village. The worry here should not actually be about the displacement of local cultural values but that the right kind of foreign norms or values should be imbibed or copied so as to better our society and make it appeal to the greater percentage of the global citizenship.

The major argument here is to get every reader of this paper to accept cultural development that comes through globalization and communication as a realistic way out of the Nigerian indigenous cultural development challenges. There is therefore the need to encourage the Nigerian media industry to become truly, an agent of socialization, with regards to the transmission of global cultural values, orientations and traditions. This will lead to the synchronization of the Nigerian cultural values and norms with that of the global community for the benefit of the Nigerian society. This will also in the long run, close the unimaginable gap in the socio-cultural cum economic lives of Nigerians and their Western and European counterparts.

There is also the issue of technology transfer. This is one sure aspect of the cultural transfer through ICTs. Information and Communication Technologies are major content of western media culture, so when they are transferred to developing

nations, the technologies may also be transferred but in a much more subtle way. It is therefore my position that a better and more sophisticated technology could give a better and more sophisticated expression to indigenous cultural values, which may help sustain them in the global market place of cultural fare.

In summary, the content of the proposed cultural development theory should focus, but not limited to the following:

1. The development of a sound explanatory mechanism and conceptual precision to address the inadequacies identified in the cultural imperialism theory.
2. A reevaluation of the limited effects theories that argue the selective processes so as to tap into the inherent capabilities which support cultural development arguments. In essence, the proposed theory must build on such theories like the attitude change theory which recognizes the place of intervening variables and the active media audience frame of analysis, in media effect.
3. How to encourage developing societies to integrate into the global community and become major participants in all global processes.
4. Getting developing societies to freely and competitively come to the global cultural fare as producer-societies.
5. A reevaluation of the parameters of cultural growth.

### **Conclusion**

It is our view that advocates of cultural imperialism theory who are still not convinced about the need for cultural development thinking in this era of globalization powered by improvements in ICTs, should not forget that our cultural values have long merged with Western/European values since the days of imperialism/colonialism. There is therefore dysfunctionality in our cultural values and orientations as a result of these anti-global dispositions. The solution therefore lies in further spread and acceptance of the global culture and deeper and more committed integration into the global village.

The fear that individual cultures and national identities will disappear should not be entertained because the world's great diversity will ensure that culture-specific, special interest fare remains in demand. Local societies and individual identities will never become American or western because of the globalization phenomenon, rather, we see a world of cultural pluralism, a one-world community inhabited by global citizens driven by the desire to live together in a spirit of global cooperation yet retaining their distinct features which make them who they are.

In summary, White (2001) notes that the developed media systems of the world, which are becoming widely available in the form of telecommunications,

computers, internet, and satellite technology, provide for greater interaction between sender and receiver than has ever before been possible. Therefore, the cultural imperialism argument that has been framed in terms of centre nations (which actually are no longer in real existence) with power over disempowered periphery nations (which are now developing nations and some of them are gradually leap frogging into the league of developed nations) must be reconsidered as the new media slowly but steadily penetrate into developing nations and societies.

In my view therefore, the advocates of cultural imperialism theory who are still not convinced about the need for cultural synchronization, flexibility and greater integration in the emerging global village are out of touch with the inherent possibilities of globalization aided by ICT. As highlighted in this paper, no one could easily predict the future or nature globalization will take in the later part of this century or in the beginning of the 22<sup>nd</sup> century.

The sophistication and continued advancement in new communication technologies also seems unpredictable. The only way out is to be aware as to avoid being caught unawares. Therefore, integration into the global system called global village seems inevitable for cultures and peoples who want to remain relevant in contemporary discourse. This dynamism should be pursued vigorously. Cultural imperialism arguments seem diversionary.

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