



THE NEW WORLD ORDER, GLOBALIZATION AND THE CHALLENGES OF CULTURAL IMPERIALISM

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Abstract

This paper interrogates the relationship between the New World Order, globalization, and the growing challenge of cultural imperialism in contemporary international society. The study argues that the post-Cold War global system, driven largely by Western political, economic, and technological dominance, has intensified the spread of cultural values, lifestyles, and ideologies across national boundaries. Through globalization, powerful nations and multinational corporations exert significant influence over weaker societies by promoting foreign languages, media content, consumer behavior, and social norms that often undermine indigenous cultures and identities. The paper examines how global communication networks, digital technologies, international trade, and entertainment industries have accelerated cultural homogenization, thereby threatening local traditions, belief systems, and cultural sovereignty, particularly in developing countries. Using a qualitative and analytical approach, the study explores the mechanisms through which cultural imperialism manifests in education, religion, fashion, music, and the media. It further assesses the implications of this phenomenon for national identity, social cohesion, and political independence. While globalization has contributed positively to economic integration, technological advancement, and intercultural exchange, the paper contends that its unequal structure reinforces dependency and cultural domination. The study concludes that preserving cultural diversity in the era of globalization requires deliberate state policies, cultural revitalization programs, and stronger support for indigenous knowledge systems and local creative industries. Ultimately, the paper emphasizes the need for a more balanced global order that promotes mutual respect, cultural pluralism, and equitable participation among nations in the global community.

Keywords: New world Order, Globalization, Cultural Imperialism

Introduction

Culture is broadly conceived as the totality of the way of life of a people. It encompasses shared language, norms, values, beliefs, customs, symbolic meanings, and expressive forms that shape how people perceive the world and how they behave within it. Culture therefore influences patterns of thought, communication, socialization, production, identity, and everyday practices. Scholars in the humanities often distinguish between *material culture*; the physical artifacts and objects people create such as clothing, tools, architecture, food, and technologies, and *non-material culture*; which includes intangible systems such as values, ethics, symbols, religion, knowledge, norms, and social roles (Giddens, 2017; Williams, 1976). Together, these elements form the cultural ecology of a society and provide continuity and meaning within historical time. Culture is also central to belonging and identity. It marks difference between peoples, social groups, and communities and is



transmitted across generations through collective memory, heritage, and socialization. The humanities pay particular attention to how culture is made, contested, preserved, transformed, and sometimes undermined by historical forces such as colonialism, capitalism, globalization, and technological change (Korinya, 2017; Fanon, 1963). For many societies in Africa, including Nigeria, culture constitutes both an inheritance and a resource through which individuals and communities orient themselves ethically, aesthetically, socially, and existentially.

The objective of this chapter is to explore the relationship between the New World Order, globalization, and the rise of contemporary cultural imperialism. The chapter argues that the restructuring of global power in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, characterized by intensified flows of information, capital, technology, and media, has facilitated the expansion of cultural dominance by powerful Western societies. These developments pose significant challenges to the cultural sovereignty, heritage, and value systems of many developing societies, particularly Nigeria. The discussion proceeds from the conceptual clarifications of key terms before examining theoretical perspectives on imperialism. The chapter then focuses on how cultural imperialism manifests in the Nigerian context, especially through the media, language, fashion, youth culture, morality, and knowledge systems. It concludes with a balanced account of both the benefits and risks associated with cultural globalization.

Conceptual Clarifications

The term New World Order has been used in different scholarly and political contexts, often to describe periods of global restructuring in world politics and economics. Its usage intensified after the Cold War as commentators described a shift toward a unipolar global system dominated by Western capitalist powers, led principally by the United States (Fukuyama, 1992; Huntington, 1996). In popular discourse, the concept is sometimes associated with conspiracy theories that imagine a coordinated elite project to create a unified global government, market, or cultural regime. However, within academic analysis, it is more productively understood as a metaphor for the transformation of international relations, economic interdependence, and cultural influence in the contemporary era.

The New World Order is strongly linked to the broader phenomenon of globalization, which refers to the increasing interconnectedness and interdependence of societies across the world. Globalization involves multidimensional processes; economic, technological, cultural, political, financial, and communicative, that compress space and time and facilitate the movement of ideas, goods, capital, and cultural forms across national borders (Korinya, 2017). From a humanities perspective, globalization is not only a structural process but also a cultural one, affecting how identities, norms, aesthetics, and symbolic meanings circulate globally.

A third major concept is cultural imperialism, which refers to the imposition, dominance, or privileging of one culture over another, typically through non-military means. Unlike



political or military imperialism, cultural imperialism works through ideology, media, language, consumerism, religion, knowledge, and symbolic power. It is often subtle, gradual, and internalized by its subjects. In the contemporary era, cultural imperialism tends to originate from powerful Western nations such as the United States, Britain, and France, and is diffused through global media, technology, education, markets, and popular culture (Tomlinson, 1991).

These three concepts; New World Order, globalization, and cultural imperialism, intersect in ways that enable powerful cultures to shape and influence weaker ones, sometimes resulting in cultural erosion, hybridization, or identity crises in less dominant societies.

The New World Order as Cultural Discourse

Although the New World Order is often framed in geopolitical or economic terms, it also carries cultural implications. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 marked the triumph of Western capitalist ideology and ushered in a period of global liberalization in which democracy, market capitalism, and consumer culture were promoted as universal models. Fukuyama's (1992) famous thesis of the "end of history" captured this moment by arguing that liberal democratic capitalism represented the final form of human governance. Whether or not one accepts this view, it is clear that the post-Cold War era consolidated the symbolic authority of Western modernity. In this context, the New World Order operates not merely as a system of international power but as a cultural narrative that elevates Western values of individualism, secularism, consumerism, human rights discourse, and scientific rationality, as globally desirable or normative. The implication is that non-Western cultures must adapt, modernize, or assimilate into global norms in order to be considered relevant, progressive, or civilized. This cultural framing is particularly significant for post-colonial societies such as Nigeria, which have historically navigated the tension between cultural preservation and modern global integration.

Globalization as Cultural Process

While globalization has undeniable economic components such as trade liberalization, financial integration, and technological diffusion, it also operates fundamentally through cultural flows. Appadurai (1996) identifies several dimensions of global cultural flow: ethnos capes (movement of people), mediascapes (flow of media images), technoscapes (technology diffusion), finances capes (global capital), and ideoscapes (ideological values). These flows transform how people imagine themselves and the world and contribute to new forms of identity, belonging, and social organization. Cultural globalization intensifies interactions between societies and accelerates processes of cultural borrowing, imitation, translation, and hybridization. It also facilitates the spread of global consumer goods, entertainment industries, languages, fashions, and lifestyles. While some scholars interpret this as the emergence of a more pluralistic cultural order, others argue that globalization tends to homogenize culture around dominant Western values. Tomlinson (1991) warns that globalization often masks deep asymmetries in cultural power, leading to forms of



cultural dependency in which marginalized societies consume cultural products of dominant societies while losing the capacity to produce or valorise their own.

For Nigeria, globalization has been both transformative and destabilizing. It has fostered new cultural expressions, especially in music, film, and fashion, but has also contributed to the erosion of indigenous languages, customary values, and community-based practices. The tension between cultural innovation and cultural displacement is a central feature of Nigerian modernity.

Cultural Imperialism and Symbolic Power

Cultural imperialism is not a new phenomenon. Historically, cultural domination accompanied military conquest and colonial expansion. In the contemporary era, however, cultural imperialism functions more subtly through symbolic power, a concept associated with Pierre Bourdieu, which refers to the ability of dominant groups to shape perceptions, meanings, and tastes in ways that appear natural or legitimate (Bourdieu, 1991). Symbolic power works through education, media, fashion, language, and social norms, and often leads marginalized groups to internalize the values of the dominant culture. Because cultural imperialism shapes consciousness rather than territory, its effects are more durable and sometimes more difficult to resist than those of classical colonialism. Colonial rule may end, but cultural dependency may persist. Fanon (1963) warned that newly independent African states risked reproducing the cultural values of their colonizers unless they actively recovered and reasserted indigenous cultural foundations. This insight remains highly relevant in contemporary Nigeria, where Western cultural forms continue to influence morality, aesthetics, and identity.

Globalization, Capitalism, and Cultural Markets

Cultural imperialism is also linked to the global capitalist market. Cultural products such as movies, music, advertising, literature, clothing, and social media content are commodities that circulate internationally. The global entertainment industry is dominated by Western companies that possess the technology, capital, and distribution networks necessary to shape global tastes and imaginations. Hollywood, MTV, Netflix, Disney, CNN, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube are not merely entertainment platforms; they are instruments of cultural influence that alter how people understand beauty, success, romance, gender relations, family structures, consumption, and social status. In Nigeria, these global cultural commodities compete with indigenous cultural expressions. While Nigerian cultural industries, such as Nollywood and Afrobeats, have achieved remarkable global traction, they remain embedded in a broader informational ecosystem saturated with Western cultural norms. As a result, Nigerian youth often negotiate between local identities and aspirational Western lifestyles mediated by social media and global entertainment platforms.



New World Order, Globalization, and Cultural Imperialism: The Nigerian Connection

The Nigerian experience illustrates how the New World Order and globalization combine to facilitate cultural imperialism. Nigeria's colonial history already created a foundation of cultural displacement through the imposition of Western education, Christianity, and English language. In the post-Cold War era, this foundation has been deepened through global technology, capitalist markets, mass media, and digital communication. Indigenous cultural practices, from dress to language to morality, face increasing competition from global cultural forms. Globalization encourages cultural comparison, and in many cases fosters an inferiority complex in which Western culture is viewed as modern, advanced, or desirable, while Nigerian culture is seen as backward, rural, or traditional. This dynamic affects how Nigerians dress, speak, parent, educate children, and imagine their futures.

Globalization is often celebrated for its integrative capacity, its technological reach, and its facilitation of cross-border cultural dialogue. However, within humanities scholarship, globalization is equally critiqued for the asymmetrical power relations it perpetuates and the subtle cultural hierarchies it reproduces (Tomlinson, 1999; Steger, 2020). Cultural globalization rarely implies a neutral exchange of values; instead, it frequently involves the prioritization of dominant cultural forms over weaker ones, often creating conditions for cultural imperialism. Cultural imperialism refers to the process through which the cultural products, values, ideologies, and lifestyle of a dominant society penetrate and shape those of a subordinate society, often through coercion, persuasion, prestige, or the normative influence of mass media and economic structures (Schiller, 1976). In the contemporary global order, this process is neither overt nor formally colonial. Rather, it is embedded within subtle channels of consumerism, entertainment, digital platforms, market forces, foreign policy, and linguistic mobility (Pieterse, 2015). The humanities regard this as an arena of contestation because culture is deeply tied to identity, meaning, aesthetics, and collective worldviews.

In Africa, and particularly in Nigeria, the globalization-cultural imperialism nexus manifests in the steady inflow of Euro-American cultural products such as music, movies, social media content, dress patterns, culinary culture, and even ideas of modernity and personal agency. These cultural forms do not arrive merely as entertainment; they carry implicit assumptions about civilization, lifestyle, gender norms, family structure, aesthetics, and morality. Thus, globalization is not solely an economic project; it is an ideological one that reproduces models of the desirable and the modern. Global capitalism serves as a powerful engine for the production and circulation of cultural goods, from Hollywood and Netflix to Apple Music, TikTok, and the global fashion industry. These platforms operate with transnational reach and shape youth imaginaries across continents (Boyd-Barrett, 2018). The non-reciprocal nature of these flows, where African and Nigerian cultural materials occupy peripheral visibility in global circuits, reinforces cultural dependency and symbolic marginalization. Nigeria's cultural exports, though rich and diverse; Nollywood,



Afrobeat, traditional dress, festivals, and oral traditions, gain less global prestige compared to their Western counterparts. Even when Nigerian cultural forms do gain global attention, they are frequently mediated, validated, or curated through Western institutions, awards, technology, or business models. This reinforces the structural imbalance inherent in cultural globalization.

The global media ecology; spanning satellite television, streaming platforms, YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok, plays a central role in shaping cultural tastes and symbolic repertoires. Through media technologies, Western values and aesthetics become standardized as universal norms. For instance, American fast-paced media content, celebrity culture, fashion trends, and liberal notions of individuality increasingly serve as global standards to which youth audiences in Nigeria and other African countries orient their identities. The humanities point out that globalization often disguises cultural imperialism as cultural liberation. Western music, movies, and digital content circulate as expressions of freedom, modernity, sophistication, or cosmopolitan identity. Meanwhile, indigenous cultural values; such as communalism, respect for authority, gendered modesty, traditional aesthetics, and moral restraint, may be reinterpreted as “backward,” “provincial,” or “old-fashioned,” especially among younger Nigerians living in urban contexts.

Language constitutes a critical site of cultural imperialism. English functions as a global lingua franca in diplomacy, technology, academia, and business. While multilingualism can be enriching, the dominance of English can marginalize indigenous languages and epistemologies (Bamgbose, 2011). In Nigeria, many students express themselves more fluently in English than in their mother tongues; some urban youth struggle to speak indigenous languages altogether. Language loss is not merely a communicative shift, it represents erosion of indigenous metaphors, oral traditions, idioms, cosmologies, and memories embedded within language. Furthermore, the humanities emphasize that language encodes worldview. Thus, cultural imperialism via English does not merely replace words; it replaces symbolic universes and interpretive frameworks. Terms such as “development,” “modernity,” “civilization,” and “success” are frequently mediated through Western ontologies and are adopted without critical interrogation.

Consumer culture is one of the most powerful tools of cultural imperialism. Global brands; from Nike and Adidas to Coca-Cola, KFC, Louis Vuitton, and Apple, shape aesthetic sensibilities and lifestyle aspirations among Nigerian consumers. The cultural power of branding is not only economic; it conveys notions of status, taste, and desirability. The adoption of Western clothing styles, fast food, luxury brands, and digital devices among Nigerian youth signifies a cultural shift in habitus and self-presentation (Bourdieu, 1984). Nigeria’s traditional dressing; *anger*, *agbada*, *isi-agu*, *buba*, *iro*, *gele*, *danshiki*, performs a different cultural logic, emphasizing symbolism, prestige, and identity rather than transnational capitalist aesthetics (Korinya & Akran, 2025). However, in urban centres, Western clothing increasingly becomes normalized for both formal and informal occasions,



while local attire becomes reserved for festivals, ceremonies, and special events. This reflects a form of selective cultural displacement.

One major fault line between Western and African cultural orientations lies in the tension between individualism and communalism. Western societies, through centuries of philosophical development from the Enlightenment onward, valorise individual autonomy, personal achievement, and self-expression (Taylor, 2007). African societies and particularly Nigerian social life, traditionally emphasize communal belonging, kinship networks, social responsibility, and collective identity. Globalization, transmitted through media and consumerism, increasingly promotes individualistic values among Nigerian youth. Expressions such as “chasing dreams,” “self-branding,” “personal goals,” and “individual success” reflect this cultural shift. While such orientations offer opportunities for creativity and self-assertion, they can undermine the communal ethos that once structured Nigerian moral and social life.

Drawing on critical theory, cultural imperialism can be understood as a form of symbolic violence, where the dominated internalize the values of the dominant without overt coercion (Bourdieu, 1991). This is evident when Nigerians voluntarily prefer Western hairstyles, fashion, weddings, accents, cuisine, or educational models over indigenous alternatives, not merely as a matter of taste but as a marker of prestige and global relevance. Symbolic violence makes domination invisible; it disguises hierarchy within aspiration.

Manifestations of Cultural Imperialism in Nigeria

The manifestations of cultural imperialism in Nigeria are diverse and multi-layered, reflecting intersections between media exposure, class aspiration, youth culture, religious transformation, educational systems, and consumer capitalism. Though globalization facilitates creativity and cross-cultural encounters, its asymmetry generates internal hierarchies of value within Nigerian society, prompting selective cultural abandonment and the reconfiguration of indigenous norms. In the humanities, such processes are analyzed not only as social or economic outcomes but as symbolic struggles over meaning, identity, memory, and belonging. Nigeria’s encounter with cultural imperialism is not new. The colonial encounter introduced Christianity, Western education, legal institutions, and Enlightenment rationality into existing cultural landscapes, challenging indigenous cosmologies and knowledge systems. However, contemporary cultural imperialism operates through more diffused channels: Hollywood, Netflix, social media influencers, global fashion industries, Western liberal ideology, and the aspirational politics of consumer goods. These channels produce subtle but far-reaching effects in lifestyles, language use, aesthetics, and moral attitudes.

Dress functions as a cultural signifier, symbolizing identity, status, and collective belonging. Traditional Nigerian attire; such as agbada, babanriga, isi-agu, Ghanaian kente, danshiki, iro and buba, and gele, encode indigenous aesthetics, cosmologies, and social values. Historically, such attire marked rites of passage, age, marital status, chieftaincy



titles, and religious festivals. With globalization, Western-style clothing; jeans, suits, T-shirts, sneakers, corporate wear, and luxury fashion, has become normalized in everyday Nigerian life (Okonkwo, 2012). Young Nigerians often associate Western clothing with modernity, cosmopolitan status, professional competence, or social mobility. By contrast, traditional attire is sometimes relegated to weddings, burials, and cultural celebrations, where it functions as nostalgia rather than everyday identity. The symbolic displacement is significant: what was once normative becomes ceremonial, and what was once foreign becomes ordinary. Moreover, the influence of Western fashion is intensified through digital platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Pinterest, and fashion blogs that project global beauty standards and body aesthetics. Nigerian designers respond creatively by hybridizing Western and African aesthetics, an example of cultural negotiation rather than total replacement. Afrobeat musicians, Nollywood actors, and Lagos fashion houses have contributed to the resurgence of indigenous textile patterns, indicating that cultural imperialism does not foreclose agency or innovation.

Language reflects the cultural politics of power. English is the official language of Nigeria and functions as the medium of instruction, governance, business, and international diplomacy. Indigenous languages such as Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, Tiv, Idoma, Ijaw, Efik, and others remain socially significant, yet their public use is shrinking, especially among middle-class youth in cosmopolitan centres such as Lagos, Abuja, and Port Harcourt (Bamgbose, 2011). Beyond grammar and vocabulary, accents have become markers of prestige. Nigerian youths who adopt American or British accents, whether through formal schooling abroad or digital mimicry, often receive increased social capital. This phenomenon indicates not simply linguistic adaptation but the internalization of cultural hierarchies in which Western speech patterns signify refinement, exposure, and modernity. In some families, children are discouraged from speaking their mother tongue to avoid being perceived as “local” or “uncultured.” Such patterns threaten linguistic continuity and the cultural knowledge encoded in proverbs, folktales, kinship descriptors, oral memory, metaphysics, and ritual practice. Language shift therefore constitutes a deeper epistemic loss than mere vocabulary displacement.

Western liberal values increasingly shape Nigerian youth culture through mass media, digital platforms, and entertainment industries. Concepts such as individual autonomy, romantic love, sexual liberation, gender equality, and self-expression often challenge traditional Nigerian norms rooted in communal responsibility, elder respect, arranged or family-mediated marriage systems, and gendered moral expectations. For example, dating culture in urban Nigeria reflects the influence of Hollywood, Western music videos, and digital celebrity culture, where relationships are framed around companionship, pleasure, and personal fulfilment rather than kinship alliances or lineage continuity. While such transformations expand opportunities for agency and self-determination, they also create intergenerational tensions within Nigerian households regarding propriety, morality, and marital expectations. Globalization also influences attitudes toward divorce, sexuality, cohabitation, and family planning. These are not merely moral changes but illustrate deeper ideological shifts about what constitutes the “good life.” Traditional Nigerian societies



historically emphasized communal logic, where the family and lineage served as primary units of social order. Western individualism introduces competing ethical frameworks centre on personal achievement and emotional satisfaction.

Nigeria's rapid integration into global media culture has profound cultural implications. Hollywood, Netflix, and Western music genres; hip-hop, trap, R&B, pop, and EDM, exert strong influence over Nigerian youth aesthetics, fashion, slang, and attitudes. The video model culture, violence aesthetics, and sexual imagery common in Western music videos compete with indigenous narratives and moral values. Nollywood and Afrobeat constitute counter-flows within the globalization process. Instead of merely absorbing Western influences, they actively export Nigerian cultural narratives to global audiences. The international success of artists such as Burna Boy, Wizkid, and Tiwa Savage demonstrates that cultural exchange is not unidirectional. However, even within these industries, Western musical production techniques, market standards, and marketing strategies shape output. Afrobeat artists often collaborate with American artists to gain transnational validation, illustrating the asymmetrical nature of cultural prestige in the global economy.

Indigenous festivals; such as the Osun-Osogbo Festival, Argungu Fishing Festival, New Yam Festivals, Igwe Festival, Durbar, and Egungun masquerade celebrations—carry rich cultural meanings related to fertility, harvest, ancestral memory, and ritual cosmology. However, these festivals increasingly compete with Western holidays such as Christmas (commercialized), Valentine's Day, Halloween (recently popular among Nigerian youth), and New Year celebrations modelled after Western aesthetics. In some Nigerian urban centres, Halloween parties, Santa-themed carnivals, and Valentine's Day events attract more youth participation than indigenous festivals. While participation does not necessarily imply rejection of tradition, it symbolizes shifts in cultural pleasure, aesthetic orientation, and collective identity. The humanities interpret these shifts as indicators of cultural re-ranking, where Western festive forms gain symbolic prestige.

Nigeria's educational system reflects Western epistemological structures inherited from colonialism. Subject hierarchies' privilege Western science, Enlightenment rationality, and European history, while indigenous knowledge systems are marginalized or treated as folklore (Mazrui, 2005). Nigerian universities frequently adopt Western curricula, citation styles, theoretical canons, and philosophical frameworks. While globalization facilitates access to global scholarship, it also reinforces epistemic dependency. For example, African philosophy, indigenous religion, and oral literature often occupy marginal curricular space compared to Western philosophy, Christian theology, and English literature. This imbalance produces what Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o (1986) describes as "cultural alienation," whereby African students become intellectually oriented toward foreign histories and imaginations rather than their own.

Religion illustrates how cultural imperialism blends with indigenous adaptation. Christianity entered Nigeria through colonial missionary enterprises and reconfigured



indigenous cosmologies, ritual practices, and ethical systems. Though Christianity has become deeply indigenized, its theological frameworks remain rooted in Western scriptural interpretation and ecclesiastical structures. Islam, while predating European colonialism in Nigeria, also exemplifies external religious influence. Both religions co-exist with indigenous belief systems; Ifa, Ogun, ancestral veneration, masquerade traditions, and divination, but indigenous religions have been marginalized as “pagan,” “idolatrous,” or “primitive.” These labels reflect colonial epistemology rather than internal indigenous criteria.

Impacts of Cultural Imperialism on Nigeria and Sub-Saharan Africa

The impacts of cultural imperialism on Nigeria and Sub-Saharan Africa are multidimensional and operate across symbolic, psychological, economic, epistemic, and political domains. While globalization enables creativity, cultural hybridity, and new forms of participation in global modernity, its asymmetrical cultural configurations generate significant pressures on indigenous cultural systems. The humanities emphasize that cultural imperialism is not merely about cultural borrowing but about the re-ranking of cultural values in ways that stratify societies along global hierarchies of prestige and power (Tomlinson, 1999; Pieterse, 2015). In the African context, cultural imperialism is particularly pronounced because the region experienced formal colonialism, missionary activity, and Western epistemic domination throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. These historical processes produced structural vulnerabilities that contemporary globalization exploits. Nigeria exemplifies these complexities due to its linguistic diversity, religious plurality, urban dynamism, media consumption patterns, and youthful population.

One of the most significant impacts of cultural imperialism is identity transformation. Nigerian youths increasingly negotiate their identities through global cultural symbols; fashion, entertainment, digital media, and lifestyle aspirations. While hybrid identities can be empowering, they also create forms of cultural alienation where indigenous cultural referents lose normative authority. Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong’o (1986) describes this alienation as the psychological distancing of Africans from their cultural roots, resulting in fragmented identities that aspire toward Western standards of taste, beauty, and civilization. In urban Nigeria, it is not uncommon for young people to express embarrassment or discomfort associated with speaking indigenous languages, participating in traditional ceremonies, or wearing local attire outside of festive contexts. This illustrates a subtle internalization of cultural hierarchies that privilege foreign cultural forms as progressive and indigenous ones as backward or provincial.

Language loss represents one of the gravest impacts of cultural imperialism on African societies. Indigenous languages encode epistemology, metaphysics, genealogy, and collective memory. As some Nigerian youths fall out of fluency in Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa, Tiv, Idoma, and other languages, the cultural knowledge embedded in proverbs, praise poetry, songs, folktales, medicine, and ritual communication is diminished. Over time,



language erosion can lead to epistemic dispossession, where indigenous knowledge systems become inaccessible to future generations (Bamgbose, 2011). Such losses weaken cultural continuity and historical consciousness. The humanities view this as not merely linguistic change, but as a restructuring of the symbolic universe through which people understand themselves and the world.

Cultural imperialism influences moral values and social norms. Western liberal values; romantic individualism, sexual autonomy, gender egalitarianism, consumerist ethics, and expressive individualism, compete with communal African values structured around kinship, elder authority, lineage survival, and moral restraint. The resulting negotiation produces moral pluralism and intergenerational tensions within Nigerian families. This impact is not inherently negative, as liberal values can expand freedoms, especially for women and youth. However, rapid moral reconfiguration can destabilize social cohesion when change outpaces cultural adaptation. The humanities study these tensions not as moral failures, but as consequences of competing value systems operating within the same cultural space.

Global consumer capitalism reinforces cultural dependency by conditioning taste and status around imported products. Nigeria imports clothing, luxury brands, fast food, cosmetics, media content, and digital technologies that are consumed as cultural goods. This pattern contributes to capital outflow and weakens domestic creative industries. Fast-food franchises, Western clothing brands, and foreign entertainment industries accrue profits that leave the domestic economy. Moreover, the symbolic prestige associated with foreign goods discourages local manufacturing and reduces demand for indigenous artisanal products. This further deepens Africa's peripheral position within the global economic system and reproduces dependency inherited from colonial trade structures.

Colonial educational legacies and globalization reinforce epistemic dependency across Africa. African universities frequently privilege Western theoretical canons, scientific paradigms, and historical narratives. Indigenous knowledge systems; traditional medicine, oral literature, philosophy, cosmology, and aesthetics, are marginalized, ignored, or treated as anecdotal rather than scholarly (Mazrui, 2005). This produces what some scholars term "epistemic imperialism," where Africans must interpret their realities using foreign intellectual frameworks. In Nigeria, students often graduate with deep familiarity with European history, Western philosophy, and American political thought, yet possess limited systematic knowledge of traditional African worldviews, African political systems, or indigenous philosophies. The humanities argue that this creates structural alienation between African youth and their cultural heritage.

Cultural imperialism creates psychological hierarchies of prestige in which Western lifestyles, standards, and aesthetics gain higher symbolic value than indigenous ones. Accents, fashion, culinary taste, entertainment preference, and even physical appearance (e.g., skin tone, hair texture) can become cultural battlegrounds for social recognition. This



contributes to self-perception challenges and diminished cultural confidence among some African youths. Examples in Nigeria include the popularity of skin-lightening creams, the prestige attached to foreign wigs or weaves, and the aspiration toward living abroad (Japa movement), which reinforces the idea that self-actualization is more attainable outside Africa. Psychological prestige hierarchies therefore extend beyond culture into existential imagination.

Cultural imperialism also influences political orientation. Many African states adopt Western models of democracy, governance, and institutional design. While such diffusion can promote accountability and modernization, it may also produce institutional mismatch when foreign systems collide with indigenous political traditions. Diplomatic alignments with Western powers often include cultural dimensions such as educational exchange programs, media influence, and ideological dissemination. These alignments shape elite worldviews and policy priorities in ways that perpetuate dependence.

Despite its impacts, cultural imperialism does not operate unchallenged. African and Nigerian cultural actors employ strategies of resistance, indigenization, and hybridization. Nollywood, Afrobeat, Yoruba-language comedy skits, Hausa Kannywood cinema, and indigenous festivals illustrate creative adaptations that reassert cultural agency. The humanities conceptualize such expressions not as passive consumption but as acts of cultural production that negotiate global influences rather than succumb to them.

Responding to Cultural Imperialism: Cultural Resistance, Revival, and Negotiation

Responses to cultural imperialism across Nigeria and Sub-Saharan Africa are neither uniform nor passive. Societies engage in resistance, adaptation, revitalization, selective appropriation, and cultural hybridization. The humanities emphasize that culture is dynamic and dialogic, not static, meaning cultural change is not inherently destructive but depends on power relations, self-definition, and agency (Hall, 1997). The strategies examined below illustrate how African societies assert cultural dignity in the face of asymmetric globalization.

One major response to cultural imperialism is the deliberate revival and revalorization of indigenous cultural forms. States, ethnic groups, and cultural institutions in Nigeria sponsor festivals, artistic exhibitions, language promotion initiatives, and heritage preservation projects. Examples include the Osun-Osogbo Festival, Argungu Fishing Festival, Tiv Kwagh-Hir theatre performances, and the Ofala Festival in Igboland. These events reaffirm identity, strengthen intergenerational cultural transmission, and provide opportunities for cultural education and tourism. Cultural revival movements also seek to correct the historical devaluation of African cultural aesthetics imposed during colonial rule. Traditional textiles such as Adire, Akwete, Anger, and Ankara have experienced renewed popularity among urban youth, demonstrating that cultural symbols can be revalorized through creative reinvention rather than abandoned.



Language revitalization represents a critical defence against cultural erosion. Several Nigerian states have reintroduced indigenous languages into school curricula and media programming. Yoruba, Hausa, and Igbo language newspapers, radio broadcasts, Nollywood films, and music videos contribute to cultural transmission among youths and rural populations. Even though dozens of minority languages remain endangered, institutional initiatives, combined with community-driven language activism, offer meaningful counterweights to linguistic imperialism. Digital platforms also open new possibilities for language preservation, as online dictionaries, subtitled films, podcasts, and indigenous-language YouTube channels make linguistic resources more accessible beyond geographic boundaries.

Nigeria's creative industries constitute one of the most successful forms of cultural resistance. Nollywood, Afrobeat, and Kannywood export Nigerian cultural narratives, aesthetics, and values across the globe. Afrobeat artists like Burna Boy, Wizkid, Tems, and others have gained international recognition while retaining indigenous musical rhythms, pidgin English, and local language elements. Nollywood's storytelling, though influenced by Western cinematic standards, draws heavily on Nigerian social realities, family structures, moral dilemmas, and communal values. These industries demonstrate that cultural participation in globalization can be reciprocal rather than unidirectional. Instead of merely consuming Western culture, Nigeria increasingly contributes to global cultural flows, thereby asserting symbolic agency.

African scholars and universities are increasingly calling for curriculum reform to reduce Western epistemic dominance. Movements such as "Africanizing the curriculum," "decolonizing knowledge," and "indigenizing scholarship" have emerged across Nigeria and South Africa. The goal is not to reject Western knowledge, but to contextualize it within African intellectual traditions, while integrating African philosophy, literature, governance systems, and arts into formal academic discourse (Korinya, 2020). This epistemic reorientation recognizes that genuine cultural sovereignty is impossible without intellectual sovereignty. Humanities-based disciplines are central to this effort because they preserve historical memory, cultivate cultural literacy, and challenge symbolic domination.

Social media platforms serve as arenas for cultural negotiation and resistance. Urban youth leverage Twitter (X), TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube to circulate indigenous humour, languages, proverbs, dance, fashion, religion, and political commentary. Online communities reinforce cultural belonging and challenge stereotypes that once circulated through missionary literature, colonial anthropology, and Western media. The digital sphere also allows diasporic Nigerians to maintain transnational cultural ties. For example, Yoruba, Igbo, and Hausa language content circulates widely across diasporic communities in the United States, United Kingdom, and Brazil, demonstrating how digital globalization can facilitate cultural reconnection rather than alienation.



Another response to cultural imperialism is selective appropriation, where foreign cultural elements are adopted in ways that reinforce rather than undermine indigenous values. Nigerian cuisine, fashion, music, and literature increasingly blend African and Western influences to produce hybrid forms. Such hybridity, according to Homi Bhabha (1994), destabilizes the binary between colonizer and colonized by turning cultural borrowing into a space of creative negotiation. Hybrid identities and cultural forms reflect the humanities' central insight that cultures evolve through interaction, not isolation, yet the key condition is agency, which determines whether hybridity empowers or subordinates.

Governmental responses to cultural imperialism include heritage preservation laws, cultural policy frameworks, educational reforms, and broadcasting regulations. Nigeria's National Council for Arts and Culture (NCAC), National Orientation Agency (NOA), and state-level cultural bureaus sponsor programs aimed at cultural education, traditional arts preservation, and value reorientation. While implementation challenges exist, the institutional recognition of cultural heritage indicates that the Nigerian state acknowledges culture as a strategic asset. At the continental level, instruments like the African Union's Charter for African Cultural Renaissance emphasize cultural sovereignty and intellectual self-reliance. These frameworks signal a growing consensus that culture is foundational to sustainable development and nation-building.

Despite these efforts, significant challenges remain. Global media conglomerates, multinational corporations, and digital platforms still dominate cultural flows with vast capital and technological advantages. Urban youth sub-cultures remain highly consumer-driven, and informal admiration for Western lifestyles persists as a marker of prestige. Moreover, cultural revival efforts often focus on major ethnic groups, leaving minority cultures vulnerable to extinction. Thus, the struggle against cultural imperialism is ongoing and multidimensional, requiring long-term strategies that combine cultural confidence, economic investment, education reform, and digital innovation.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the intersections between the New World Order, globalization, and the challenges of cultural imperialism, with a particular focus on Nigeria. From a humanities perspective, culture is central to identity, social cohesion, knowledge production, and moral orientation. Globalization, while facilitating communication, creativity, and economic exchange, has also enabled the pervasive dissemination of dominant Western cultural norms, values, and practices. The New World Order, as both a political and economic discourse, functions alongside globalization to structure asymmetrical relations of cultural influence, privileging Euro-American forms while marginalizing indigenous African cultural systems.

Cultural imperialism in Nigeria manifests in multiple domains: language, dress, fashion, social values, morality, media consumption, education, and youth culture. English has assumed prominence over indigenous languages, and Western clothing, entertainment, and



lifestyle models increasingly shape youth aspirations. Moral codes rooted in communal values have been challenged by individualistic ideologies propagated through media and digital platforms. Even educational and epistemic systems continue to privilege Western knowledge, reinforcing dependency and undermining indigenous intellectual heritage. Despite these challenges, Nigeria exhibits resilience and cultural agency. Indigenous festivals, Nollywood, Afrobeat, language revitalization programs, and hybrid creative industries demonstrate active cultural negotiation. Educational reforms and digital initiatives offer opportunities to reclaim epistemic sovereignty and reassert cultural pride. Moreover, selective appropriation and hybridization reveal that cultures are not merely passive recipients of influence but active participants in shaping their evolution.

The chapter highlights that cultural imperialism is neither entirely benign nor entirely destructive. While Western influence has facilitated technological, creative, and economic growth, it has also contributed to identity disruption, moral reconfiguration, linguistic erosion, and epistemic dependency. The Nigerian case illustrates the need for conscious cultural strategies that balance openness to global flows with preservation and valorisation of indigenous cultural systems. Humanities scholarship emphasizes that cultural resilience, creative adaptation, and critical engagement with global forces are essential for sustaining identity, moral frameworks, and cultural heritage in the face of globalization and cultural imperialism.

In conclusion, the relationship between the New World Order, globalization, and cultural imperialism is complex and dynamic. For Nigeria, the path forward lies in cultivating cultural self-awareness, promoting education that values indigenous knowledge, leveraging creative industries, and strategically engaging with global cultural flows to ensure that development and modernity are not achieved at the expense of cultural integrity.

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