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COMMUNICATION | CRITICAL ESSAY

Rebuilding old empire: BBC and indigenous language broadcasting in Nigeria

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Abstract: Using the framework of postcolonial and critical cultural studies of communication, this essay examines the rise of BBC indigenous language broadcasting in Nigeria. Taking an interdisciplinary approach from the fields of language studies, media studies, and cultural studies, the essay argues that media and communication contact that occurs between colonists and their previous colonies cannot be taken as coincidental or casual; therefore, the need to combine the local and global in theorizing new frameworks for understanding this complex relationship and the power dynamics that occurs alongside it.

Subjects: African Studies; Television; Cultural Studies

Keywords: BBC; Nigeria; Indigenous; broadcasting; global media

1. Introduction

On 18 October 2022, it was exactly 100 years that the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) was founded. Also, on 1 October 2022, it was 62 years that Nigeria got independence. The development of BBC narrowcasting, especially with indigenous languages over the last few years, has continued to transform global communication and even broadcasting within local communities. It is almost impossible to discuss the significance of the BBC without mentioning the telegraph invention of the 1800s that opened the wave for international broadcasting. Carey (1983) mentioned that the telegraph did not only form the foundation upon which global communication began, but it also spurred the "urban imperialism" that was to follow. Carey also argued that the entrace of the words "empire' and "imperialism" into the English lexicon after the telegraphic cables were laid suggested a deeper political agenda that cannot be ignored in the history of global communication. It was the transatlantic telegraph that began a new phase of global communication and led to a better coordination between colonial powers and their colonies. In colonial Africa, the telegraphic cables were laid to connect the western and eastern parts of the continent, with Britain playing a dominant role and competing with other countries like Portugal, France, and Germany (Quevedo, 2010). Britain held "near monopoly" of the telegraph cables in the nineteenth century due to its robust capital market and its marine business (Headrick & Griset, 2001) through which it controlled its colonies.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ololade Afolabi is a scholar-teacher of media studies with specialties in international communication, global/transnational media, critical cultural studies, and African women studies. Her research explores the role of media industries in shaping identities of people in the Global South and how new discourses about them are emerging. Her research has covered issues surrounding transnational media flow, television in nonwestern cultures, political economy of global media industries among many others.

One of the many ways the British colonial government exerted control over the Nigerian masses was in the use of broadcast communication. Before World War II, radio broadcasting was the dominant communication form through which messages were sent from Britain to Nigeria and BBC provided most of the contents with supplements from African local news and music (Armour, 1984). However, the Colonial Office soon realized that there was an urgent need to expand broadcasting in Nigeria and through a letter sent to the colonial governors by the then Secretary of State for the colonies of the United Kingdom, Arthur Creech Jones, emphasizing that broadcasting is a form of government with much advanced opportunities. The Colonial Office responded by seeking the help of BBC in surveying the broadcasting landscape in Africa and helping to train and advise in the development of this service (Ofori-Amoah, 2019). In 1946, the Colonial Office later requested that a staff from BBC be sent to work with the Colonial Office in which Oliver J. Whitley was selected for this position. According to Armour (1984), this collaboration between BBC and the Colonial Office was important for injecting the ideologies of BBC into communications produced by the Colonial Office which would then be circulated among important quarters of government. The partnership between BBC and the Colonial Office led to the establishment of the Nigeria Broadcasting Service in 1951 in which many of its initial staff were borrowed from BBC to help in training and service support (Arthur & Ukelina, 2021).

Building on this partnership of BBC and Colonial Office in the history of Nigerian broadcasting industry, the spurt of BBC narrowcasting in Nigeria the last few years is one that calls for a more critical reflection particularly in the context of postcolonial framework. As BBC expands its broadcasting brands into local communities in Nigeria, several ideological questions are raised about how this agenda burrows into a neocolonial strategy of Britain in maintaining its cultural and political prowess in former colonies. Therefore, this article seeks to discuss the rise of BBC indigenous language broadcasting in Nigeria within historical and postcolonial frameworks [Shome & Hedge, 2002; Shome (2016)]. The purpose of this paper is to synthesize the historical developments of BBC and its current indigenous branding of local productions in Nigeria with the political realities of the nation. The paper argues that BBC indigenous language broadcasting in Nigeria simulates the nineteenth century British-colonial empire and that rather than quickly celebrating the various contents that the network now produces in local languages, it is important to contextualize these productions within a broader framework of postcolonialism while identifying how BBC supports this agenda or challenges it.

2. A brief history of BBC

BBC was established on 1 January 1927, by royal charter made up of a board of governors in which Sir John Reith was appointed as the director general (Crisell, 2005). Although the network is considered a publicly funded institution, it is also referred to as a "quasi-autonomous" establishment because of its strong affiliation with the political spaces of the British government. The network was established with the mission to "inform, educate and entertain, provide political balance, and provide timely information in times of national emergency and Parliamentary proceedings" (Crisell, 2005, p. 18). It is not permitted to provide any editorial content or advertising; thus, its funding has often come from broadcast receiving licenses in which the state determines the cost. The public service identity of BBC has often been questioned because of the network's relationship with the British government and how it applies the principles of public service (see Collins, 2006). While the network asserts its editorial independence from government influence, the fact that the state determines the broadcast license fee and regulates its content raises concerns about the extent to which it truly embodies the public values it purports to uphold. The problem of public–private identity of BBC has been a long standing one that past government administrations have investigated providing alternative ways to fund the network that would be truly independent of the government.

One of such prominent attempts is the Peacock Committee that was set up by Margaret Thatcher in 1986 and led by Professor Alan Peacock, a leading classical liberal economist (Booth, 2020). The committee was set up to investigate the possibility of eradicating the broadcast license

fee charged by BBC and replacing it with other alternatives like advertising and other contents that could be monetized (O'Malley & Jones, 2009). However, even though Peacock had a free market economic ideology, he did not share in a completely government independent network perspective that Thatcher's administration wanted. Instead, among other suggestions, the committee reported that the license fee should be retained, BBC should not be forced to finance itself through advertising content, pensioners should be excluded from the license fee, and that the license fee should be indexed annually to reflect inflation rate (Peacock et al., 1987). Peacock believed that a true free market economy is the one that does not reflect any political bias but that allows the citizens to have a complete autonomy on their choice and not the one that is mediated by any political stance. Therefore, in the committee's view, BBC is more autonomous in its then public service identity than one that is completely privatized and left in the hands of few people to control.

The discussion surrounding it did not end with the Peacock Committee. In fact, it was the beginning of it and in a more recent scrutiny, the 2005 BBC Charter Review by the House of Lords investigated the government's Green Paper on the need for a BBC that is independent of government control. The selected committee initially published a report stating that license fee continues to be the best way to fund BBC and that the media network should be investigated by independent organizations that are not affiliated with the government. The final report published in 2006 further emphasized these views and added that the National Authority Office (NAO) should be involved in scrutinizing BBC's bid and undertake any other monetary reviews that pertains to the network. The ongoing trends shows that there is an enduring question about the public image of BBC as to how the network wants to be perceived by its audience not only in the UK but around the world. The political economy of broadcasting corporation's media networks at large has been an enduring question in the global media studies (see Herman & McChesney, 1997; Schiller, 1992; Winseck & Pike, 2007); therefore, it is nearly impossible to completely discuss the cultural power that media institutions emit without scrutinizing the ideological background that shapes these productions.

However, beyond the public–private dichotomy of BBC, BBC has spread beyond the UK and Europe and has expanded its service to different parts of the world through the BBC World Service. BBC launched the BBC World Service, initially known as the "empire service", on 19 December 1932, and broadcasts to more than 180 million people across the world (BBC, 2023). The service includes other brands of BBC like BBC Global News, BBC.com, BBC Monitoring, and BBC Media Action, the charity arm of the media institution. BBC World Service is funded by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and has also faced questions of impartiality and independence that the domestic channel has faced over the years (Baumann et al., 2011). One of the biggest events that shaped the history of BBC World Service is World War II. At the peak of the war in 1944, BBC was already broadcasting in more than 50 languages across the world and transmitting more than 130 hours of programs weekly (Johnston, 2020). BBC used its broadcasting during the war to project the empire identity of Britain and established guidelines that detailed how more program times should be given to the "Empire matters" (Hajkowski, 2002). While the network tried to "curtail certain images of the Empire, it by no means played down the Empire" (Hajkowski 2022, p.136). It utilized different broadcasting formats including interviews, quizzes, and features among others to portray the British Empire as a nation that is very sensitive and concerned with people's welfare during the war and can adapt itself to the changing conditions of the war.

While World War II is long over, the empire nature of the BBC continues to echo into its broadcasting trend across the world. With the introduction of the BBC foreign language broadcasting, the issues of credibility and propaganda of the British state have been brought to question and although BBC launched the foreign language service since the 1930s beginning with Arabic, French and German Services in 1938 (Johnston & Robertson, 2019), most enduring work on this topic have yet to fully explore the relationship between foreign language broadcasting and colonial/neocolonial agenda. More recently, the incursion of BBC foreign language broadcasting

into Nigeria, a former colony of Britain, raises several ideological questions on how the network revisits the nineteenth century British-Nigeria political tension and the myriads of postcolonial issues that came with it or how it provides an opportunity for national integration for a nation that has been politically fragmented by allowing minority voices to count within and outside the country. This paper therefore progresses by discussing BBC foreign language broadcasting in Nigeria by placing it within the historical context of the British colonial period in Nigeria and postcolonial communication framework (Shome and Hedge, 2002). The overarching question for this essay is what critical cultural perspectives does the incursion of BBC indigenous broadcasting brands in Nigeria present and how can global media scholars respond to these perspectives? The paper further discusses areas of disconnections and sutures that global media scholars need to continue to examine while examining global communication in a postcolonial setting and what this might mean not just for communication scholars but also scholars of international politics and relations.

3. BBC and indigenous language broadcasting in Nigeria

In 2018, the British Broadcasting Corporation launched the BBC Yoruba, Pidgin, and Igbo channels in Lagos, Nigeria, where it promises to produce stories "affecting the lives of audiences across the region" (BBC, 2018). The network also offers two 60-second video roundups daily that highlight main news about the local communities where the network is broadcasting through their indigenous languages. According to Fran Unsworth, the Deputy Director of News and Current Affairs at the BBC World Service, the reason for launching the indigenous broadcasting model in Nigeria is to "world" to local audiences while also telling the story of local audiences to the rest of the world while also "uplifting local languages" (Oyewole, 2016). In addition to the three local languages being used in Nigeria, Unsworth also mentioned that the network would be launching similar services in other parts of Africa including Eritrea and Ethiopia and adding nine additional languages to the already 29 that the network has been broadcasting in different parts of the world. Currently, BBC runs different websites and social media pages for each of the three languages that it broadcasts in, within Nigeria. All the websites and social media pages are completely run in the local languages. As of November 2023, BBC Yoruba Facebook page has over 2 million followers and 700,000 likes, BBC Hausa has over 5 million followers and 3 million likes, and BBC Igbo has over 1 million followers on Facebook and 400,000 likes. BBC Hausa News also has over 1 million followers on Twitter. The trend here is clear. BBC has successfully captured a huge part of the Nigerian population through this narrowcasting mechanism and particularly in a country with limited free press like Nigeria (Opeyemi, 2022) many of the citizens might find foreign service as a form of alternative site for expressing themselves.

In a society, where the colonial English language has become the dominant language in government and official parastatals, indigenous languages are often threatened and have been gradually dwarfed over the years in spaces where it should be legitimized like schools, offices, and national media outlets. The severe threat that indigenous languages have been undergoing in Nigeria might have also contributed to the flourishing of BBC indigenous brands in the country. Several scholars have traced the decline in Nigeria's local languages to different reasons including political motivation, elite culture, complex cultural and linguistic structure of the country, and the globalization of the English language among others [Aboh, 2022; Ajepe & Ademowo, 2016; Danladi, 2013)]. The literature also shows that the lack of a national language from any of the major languages continues to give English its prominence in the country. However, a more historical analysis of the threat that indigenous languages face in the country shows that the creation of an artificial state by the British colonialists formed the backdrop upon which indigenous languages have been declining over time in the country over time [see Agbanusi (2017); Nwanyanwu (2017)]. For example, Salawu and Hassan (2010) explained how the "cultural dissimilarity" among the different ethnic groups in Nigeria creates tension among these groups that indigenous languages are not able to address. Nigeria is a multi-ethnic society with at least 300 languages (Ogunyemi & Bada, 2020) and the amalgamation of the northern and southern protectorates by the British. Although it merged the two regions of the country physically, it did not

necessarily integrate their cultural and linguistic peculiarities. The British did not consider the ethnic diversity of the two regions but focused on creating geographical relations, thereby producing an artificially created nation. These intrinsic differences contributed to how the different ethnic groups perceived one another post-independence. The differences could also explain why some arguments have been made against the British amalgamation for forcefully creating a nation that did not in any way share similar identities [see Maiangwa et al. (2018); Akanmidu (2018)].

Although, historical antecedents played a huge role in the threat that indigenous languages encounter in Nigeria, other factors including globalization, technology and media, and migration among several others have also been discussed as responsible for indigenous language threat globally. A study by Brinklow (2021) argued that the role of digital technologies such as Internet of Things, social media, and other technological developments has allowed the marginalization of indigenous languages across the world. Brinklow added that while on the one hand, the development of these digital platforms and technologies allows for cross-border communication to increase, on the other hand, most of the communication that happens through these technologies are carried out in "world's most common languages and often provided by a small number of multinational corporations" (p.242). Since many of these technological developments happen in the West, the language of design is often English; therefore, when non-English speakers interact with these technologies, they are often confined to the dominant language and gradually begin to find their indigenous languages unfit for this technological advancement. For example, the development of virtual smart assistants like Alexa and Google Home limits makes it impossible for non-English speakers to interact with the devices in a different language other than English. Similarly, McIvor et al. (2020) also mentioned that indigenous language revitalization (ILR) has suffered a decline during the COVID-19 pandemic because most ILR work is carried out in a face-to-face setting and often involves the older members of the communities who are often not technology savvy. Therefore, the disruption to social life that the pandemic caused invariably affected the work of ILR workers and has the potential of reducing the importance of such work.

From the ongoing, a critical and important debate ensues about the need to preserve indigenous languages across the world and more specifically Nigeria in this case but also the risks that come with that especially from an international perspective. While BBC provides a space for indigenous communities in Nigeria to mainstream their endangered languages, it also raises questions relating to some more critical issues that would be explored in this paper. Also, more research is needed to investigate how the audience interacts with the local BBC services in the country, and there are a few things that could be articulated from this BBC's incursion into Nigeria's mediascape. Although the issue of press freedom continues to threaten the objectivity of news production in Nigeria [see Akinwale (2010); Layefa and Johnson (2016); Apuke (2016); Raymond et al. (2017)], that is not the only issue when considering the flow of BBC's products into Nigeria. Therefore, what follows in the rest of the paper is a critical cultural reflection of BBC's indigenous language broadcasting in Nigeria. This essay situates the argument within a critical cultural and postcolonial analysis of how BBC indigenous brands raise questions of neocolonialism and media imperialism within the country. This essay does not necessarily argue that BBC indigenous brands are unnecessary in the Nigerian market, but it does highlight the need to understand the dialectical relationships that exist between this kind of production and the culture of the foreign communities. As many studies have shown that media imperialism is no longer enough to explain the kind of "asymmetrical interdependence" that operates in global media flow from many Global South communities ([Straubhaar, 2007; Thussu, 2007; Pieterse, 2004]), this paper adds to this argument by showing that newer theoretical models of global media studies are needed as culture moves from media imperialism, to hybridity and what I now refer to as "global media indigeneity."

4. A critical cultural and postcolonial reflection on BBC indigenous brands in Nigeria

As established earlier, BBC's indigenous brands in Nigeria go beyond crossing boundaries of multi-ethnicity in the country. Language is a very important part of people's lives and culture; therefore,

broadcasting in local languages to Nigerian audiences reflects deeper cultural connections that must be critically contended. Several scholars (Kumar, 2014; Shome, 2016) have argued for the need to engage in an interdisciplinary approach in media and communication analyses. This is because as the field begins to widen to include various issues that cross disciplinary boundaries, the need for complex theoretical and methodological approaches to analyzing media and communication content becomes very necessary. For example, Shome and Hedge (2002b) argued that postcolonial studies have the power to transform ideologies and enduring knowledge and, therefore, should be embraced as a potent tool of social change. The authors particularly mentioned the need to take postcolonial analyses beyond national frameworks but should also understand how neocolonial structures and systems imbue into the cultural practices of people in transnational spaces. Also, as digital technologies continue to proliferate dominant western paradigms, postcolonial analyses of global communication practices become an important area to examine and re-theorize how issues of identities, politics, and history operate in a changing media world.

While the need for a postcolonial analysis is important in the field of media studies, Shome (2019) warned against dichotomizing the field into western and non-western postcolonial societies. In other words, the effort is not to produce two distinct set of theories that examine the lives of those in the Global South and North as those having unrelated experiences, rather it is an attempt to understand the "various post/colonial histories that inform and impact mediated lives in the postcolonial non-West and Global South … by recognizing how those mediated contexts are outcomes of colonial histories and their postcolonial aftermath" (p. 3). In other words, the attempt to map postcolonial trends emerging in the communication practices in the Global South allows global media scholars to examine how historical antecedents in the global geopolitics continue to reverberate in the cultural production in such societies. Whether the culture is produced by the people who live in and experience this postcolonial world themselves or by others who choose to represent their experiences as outsiders, understanding how the colonial resurfaces in media production of those who occupy this part of the world can help to de-hegemonize the cultural interpretations that emerges from our analyses of these productions.

Another trend that emerges from the postcolonial and critical cultural analyses of media studies is the need to contest the discourse of "difference" when discussing the experiences of people in the Global South. The discourse of difference in the Global South is not just limited to the field of media studies. "Difference" in the study of Global Southerners cuts across disciplinary boundaries, thereby providing a robust context for scholars to engage in deeper analytical work on how difference operates in the postcolonial world. Mohanty (1984), for instance, critiqued the political undertone that shapes the writings and categorization of feminist writers in the West. She argues that western feminists assume a homogenous view of the term women and therefore, exercise colonial power when writing about Third World women. Compared to the western counterparts, Third World women are often represented as "poor, sexually constrained and uneducated" (p.337) while western women are represented as working, educated, and as having sexual agency. This is what she refers to as the "Third World Difference". That is "that stable, ahistorical something that apparently oppresses most if not all the women in these countries" (p.335). This universal categorization of Third World women avoids the individuality of the different women and the peculiarities of historical, social, political, and economic antecedents. This further produces a binary position of power where all women are powerless, and all men are powerful and not recognizing that not all women are powerless and not all men are powerful if we open power to the contradictions of race, history, and cultures.

In the field of media studies, difference is conceived as the Otherness of those who live in non-West postcolonial societies (Shome, 2019). As Kumar and Parameswaran (2018) put it, difference refers to "encounters with externalized figures whose Otherness surfaces in relation to one's collective/group/tribal identity … " (p. 351). In other words, difference creates this binarism whereby the Other is constantly contesting against the dominant and where the Other becomes relevant only when it is being examined as a struggle against other dominant forces. So, then the

question is when does difference become mainstream instead of alternative? As mentioned earlier, the quest of postcolonial scholars is not to continuing differentiating the North from the South rather it is to understand how the experiences of the South shape the theories of communication in a way that helps to loosen the tightened ends of the scholarship to embrace the individuality and specificities of experiences emerging from the postcolonial world. Shome and Hegde (2002) also mentioned the need to "restage" the way "difference" is understood in critical cultural scholarship. Difference has always been fundamental to cultural politics because it lets scholars engage in how identity discourse is shaped by the politics of difference, that is the way some social groups consider themselves as "self" and others as "different" or themselves as insiders and others as cultural outsiders. In this sense, difference may not necessarily mean exclusion or Othering of a group, but instead how the identities of such groups are evolving as they encounter media flows from other parts of the world. Whichever way, difference becomes an important discourse that critical cultural studies scholarship in transnational spaces must continue to examine to understand how the concept is either being restaged or co-opted into global cultural productions.

In short, the term difference itself is not static. It is constantly going through reconceptualization and critique that allows scholars from different fields examine how cultures are being constructed as different from other cultures and if this construction raises any ideological concerns that calls for a more critical examination of such representation. It is from this standpoint that critical cultural and postcolonial studies offer a rich way of examining the flow of BBC indigenous brands into Nigerian market. While the mainstreaming of indigenous identities allows submerged voices to emerge (at least within national borders), it is important to examine some other critical issues that this flow of BBC's narrowcasting raises in the Nigerian cultural market. Therefore, although difference allows us as media scholars to engage with new discourses emerging from marginalized communities across the world, it also has the potential of raising more "alterity" if it is not critically examined. Difference can recontextualize prevailing hegemonic attitudes about postcolonial societies into a more modern form thereby ostracizing such communities as people who exist in their own closed worlds. The rest of this section of the paper articulates some of these postcolonial and critical cultural concerns in BBC's penetration into the Nigerian market.

From a postcolonial standpoint, the incursion of BBC indigenous brands into Nigeria reminds the audience of the nineteenth-century British invasion into the colony of Nigeria. The British colonists understood the multi-ethnicity structure of Nigeria and knew that for them to be able to penetrate the country, they would need to adopt systems that fit into the structure of the different ethnic societies. For example, the Yoruba ethnic group who are predominantly based in the southwestern part of the country operated a monarchical system where the king (oba) ruled over the communities. The Yoruba exhibited a pan-Yoruba identity among the various Yoruba groups and had a "strong sense of ethnic and regional identity" (Falola & Oyeniyi, 2015, p. 182). They also had a very collective attitude towards their ethnicity and were more open to development and westernization which made them easier for the British rulers to work with. Therefore, when the British invaded Yorubaland, they understood that they could only penetrate the Yoruba people by first "capturing" their kings. Thus, they utilized this strategy in operating in the major Yoruba kingdoms in the region (see Charles, 2022). Although modernization continues to threaten the kingship operation of the Yoruba nation, kings are still very important among the Yorubas and indeed in most African societies.

Even amidst modernization and civilization, "modern political powers" continue to work with kings for them to have easy access to local communities (Ogunode, 2020). The trend of BBC Yoruba continues to simulate this kingship strategy. Although BBC Yoruba's main goal is on language upliftment as mentioned earlier, a quick reading of the BBC Yoruba website shows there is a preponderant focus on kings, Yoruba leaders, and other important Yoruba personalities in the coverage on Yoruba news. The discourse of kingship that BBC Yoruba focuses on shows that there continues to exist a connection between BBC broadcasting model and the historical antecedents of the nineteenth century invasion. Kings have power within their jurisdictions. The focus on kingship

stories allows BBC to really penetrate very local and rural communities within the Yoruba nation, thereby elevating the power of the international broadcasting network within such communities. Especially with the decline in indigenous languages in the country, the production of BBC Yoruba can make those in these rural communities feel more included.

Compared to the Yorubas, the Igbo, another major ethnic group in the country, is quite different. Before the coming of the British in the nineteenth century, the Igbo operated a system of autonomous communities (see Omeje, 2019) that made it less easy for the British to penetrate them. Theirs was not a central form of government like the Yorubas; therefore, the British needed to penetrate each of these communities individually. However, since independence, the Igbo ethnic group have been creating a sense of community to secede from Nigeria and form their own nation (Biafra nation) because of concerns relating to exclusion, denial of rights, and lack of trust in the government [see Otiono (2021); Ugwueze (2021)]. BBC Igbo continues to play into this trend when covering stories about the Igbos. The network focuses on stories around communities, individuals, and other cultural matters within the region. Although the Igbo also have kings, stories around kings are not prominent like the Yorubas. The network understands the dynamics of the Igbo culture that the appeasement to kingship does not necessarily give them access like in the southwestern part of the country, so a different strategy is employed. Similarly, in the northern part of the country where the Hausa ethnic group reside, BBC employs the religion and political tactic in reaching the audiences in this part of the country. When the British handed over power in 1960, they handed over to the Hausa ethnic group, and since post-independence, the Hausa have continued to dominate the political scene in Nigeria. The Hausa were very different in many ways from the Yoruba and the Igbo because they exhibited strong adherence to Islamic belief and were predominantly farmers and herders who operated a caliphate system of governance (see Buba, 2021). As BBC continues to penetrate the Hausa region, many of their stories focus on religion, culture, and political leadership in the country.

From the ongoing, there seems to be a connection between how the British managed their operation in Nigeria in the nineteenth century and how that is being repackaged in the indigenous language broadcasting. As mentioned earlier, the attempt here is not to say whether BBC's language broadcasting format is unnecessary in the country, particularly when considering the political and ethnic fragmentation that has happened over last few decades in the nation, instead this essay calls attention to the critical issues of postcolonial trends that are appearing in these new broadcasting scenes. It is only expected to think that before entering a new market, it is important to understand the dynamics of such a market. However, in the case of BBC and Nigeria, the situation is much deeper and dialectical. The Nigerian cultural and political landscapes are not new to the BBC. Therefore, this new incursion cannot be taken at a surface level, but this essay provokes the need for global media scholars to engage in deeper analytical and empirical work on how BBC's new broadcasting models integrate into other aspects of Nigeria's culture and how the audiences are interacting with this media work. An argument might be that it allows those who occupies the subaltern to feel empowered within their local communities, but beyond this surface-level assumption is the need to theorize a more complex framework that allows scholars to examine relationships, economy, and power of previous colonists with their colonies to excavate any latent or manifest ideological reinforcements that shape these new encounters.

On the other hand, from a critical cultural perspective, the narrowcasting model of BBC can help to "restage" difference as Shome and Hegde (2002) argued. Considering that enduring studies in the field of international communication have explored the issue of media imperialism and how local cultures are often subverted under the dominant culture, BBC indigenous language brands could potentially help to change this trajectory. By broadcasting in indigenous languages, the local audience retains a certain level of agency in how their stories are aired, although still within the political economy structure of the media network doing this. So, in this case, although Nigerians can contest how their stories are being framed on the global media scene, they do this within the resources and framework that BBC provides. In short, BBC retains the autonomy on what gets

covered and how it is covered and how the story is being told. The major difference here is that the world gets to hear these stories directly from those who own the stories, especially the video roundups that the network produces. Therefore, Nigerians themselves have the chance to "restage" their difference. They can tell their own stories, in their own languages and from their own standpoints. They can choose how they want to be perceived as different from other communities around the world or if they choose to be branded as part of a global identity. This is the point of Shome and Hegde (2002) that difference is evolving, and that globalization has destabilized the traditional meaning of the term. However, it might be also useful to consider how much of such destabilization really happens especially when considering the limited global reach of these indigenous languages. While difference may be contested at local level, for a network like BBC with global audiences, it would be much more productive on a global level. This is partly because the local audience has little to prove in terms of difference among their own people. Although Nigeria is a multi-ethnic society as discussed earlier, there is still less to prove about who individual ethnic groups are than who Nigeria as a nation is on a global stage.

Without downplaying the importance of local identities, it is critical to the scholarship of global media to examine how these new brands by BBC create a more overarching importance for the identities of those who occupy these margins. For example, what kind of difference does it make for those who are outside of Nigeria when they interact with these indigenous brands? If the work of BBC is really to break down the borders of language barrier in the country so that those in the remote places can have access to broadcasting, then it might be equally important to question what such agenda means to the BBC network itself? Is this more of a political economic objective of increasing global revenue and maintaining power relations across the globe or is it an attempt to create a dominant culture of BBC in these less powerful regions of Nigeria? Considering that many of these communities are often not able to speak for themselves as Spivak (1993) argued, it becomes imperative to address how BBC's flow into Nigeria may represent a neocolonial ideology especially when the audiences involved are ignorant of this subtle strategy. Therefore, as the field of global media studies continues to expand, this essay calls the attention of researchers to explore the connections between postcolonial culture and global communication and questions communication orders that makes local cultures continually subject to the systems of western nations and their media agenda.

5. Retheorizing global media studies: indigeneity in theories and practice

Lastly, this essay would like to draw attention to an area of media studies that needs to be further explored, which is global media indigeneity. Global media indigeneity examines the lives of indigenous people around the world who use different forms of media to explore self-representation of their identities and cultures [see Wilson and Stewart (2008); Glynn and Tyson (2007)]. Although theories in the study of global communication have gradually shifted from the imperialist model to hybridity model as discussed earlier. In this paper, it seems that it is no longer adequate to capture the many changes that are happening in the development of global communications across the world. For example, beyond the flow of western media into Global South communities, how do we theorize the flow that happens among Global South nations themselves and how more powerful Global South nations are "colonizing" the culture of less powerful Global South nations? How about the national politics that subsume indigenous local media within national and subnational borders? Also, how do we explain the shift to local and indigenous cultures within the global community by established western media networks to help bring these less-known people to the global stage? At first, it might feel like this is a much-needed salvation for those who have been forgotten by the media of their own nation; however, a more critical examination reveals deeper agendas that need to be further explored.

As an alternative to the preponderantly used media imperialism and neocolonialism theories, global media indigeneity calls for a deeper interrogation of how local cultures, politics, and other spheres of a society influence the identities and lives of those who live at the margins of these societies. While neocolonialism and media imperialism can help to uncover underlying ideological

reinforcements of more established global media networks into foreign societies, global media indigeneity can point attention to how these local subcultures respond to these reinforcements using their own indigenously produced media forms and contents [see Báez (2022); Fisher (2019)]. Through analytical and ethnographic approaches, this theoretical approach can provide a scholarly view into the lived realities of those who live on the margins of national borders and the challenges they face in navigating the media terrain within their own nations. It can also help to theorize why more dominant networks like BBC would be interested in reaching out to these subalterns and how the indigenous people respond to it. More importantly, this type of work does not only hold the West accountable for infiltrating into the cultures of these indigenous people, it also questions how and why national politics, culture, economy, and similar indexes create a disjuncture between the dominant and less dominant cultures within their national geographies, thereby creating a more robust framework for theorizing the flow of media in the Global South.

Therefore, as this essay concludes, I would like to call for newer theoretical models that explore the relationship between indigenous people and the global media. These newer models can examine the critical agenda behind the drive for established global media networks to begin entering local subaltern markets. What do these newer markets offer this network beyond just operating on a national level in such nations and how does this understanding help scholars to further explore the political, economic, and colonial discourse that shape global media production in remote places of the world? This is not to say that the older theoretical models are now irrelevant to this new phase of global communication; however, this essay argues that there is now a need for deeper analytical frameworks that take all aspects of the global and local into consideration when theorizing global studies. With the preponderant flow of media technologies across the world, ideologies of global media industries can no longer be taken as casual or coincidental. Especially when considering that the flow is still not balanced between the South and North poles of the world, the constant exploration of the developing nations' markets by established networks needs to be continuously put under the microscopic lenses of critical media scholarship and any latent or manifest marginalization of indigenous cultures needs to be constantly addressed.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has shown that the rebranding of BBC's flow into Nigeria should not be taken lightly. The essay calls for more empirical studies that utilize the frameworks discussed in this paper to examine some of the cultural and socio-political impacts of this new broadcasting trend in the country. From an international politics standpoint, Africa and indeed many other Global South communities have often been treated as places that need development, and this has historically triggered the need for action from the West and several international organizations. While this action itself is not problematic, what is, however, more important is how these developments have been implemented in these nations and media have often been a major instrument. Therefore, it might be safe to mention that when the media landscape of a country has been invaded, the country itself is at risk of several other forms of invasion and exploitation including a neocolonial agenda.

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