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GLOBALIZATION AND CULTURAL IMPERIALISM: A STUDY OF THE U.S.  
RESPONSE TO THE NIGERIAN SAME-SEX MARRIAGE LAW OF 2014

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**Abstract**

The paper focused on globalization and cultural imperialism with emphasis on the U.S. response to Nigerian same-sex marriage laws of 2014. Perhaps the most significant threat to the nation-states, at least to Nigeria was the process of globalization and its resultant effects on their cultural identities. Culture is usually the first casualty of imperialism and globalization. The objectives of this paper are to validate the assumption that Anglo-American reaction to Nigeria same-sex law is driven by cultural imperialistic interest and to find out the impact of globalization on Nigeria culture linking American reactions toward Nigeria government on same sex marriage ban. The instruments for data collection were mainly secondary sources while simple explanatory and historical methods were used in its analyses. The study thus used two theories such as Marxian theory of domination and structural theory of imperialism. The paper found that globalization is an instrument of cultural imperialism, same-sex marriage relationship is unnatural and injurious to the sensibilities of human society and same-sex laws of 2014 in Nigeria are not violation of human rights rather it is a human license.

**Introduction**

Globalization is one of the most frequently used concepts in the political science. As the term implies, globalization is a process by which the economies of the world become increasingly integrated, leading to a global economy and increasingly global economic policy-making, for example, through international agencies such as the World Trade Organization (WTO). Globalization also refers to an emerging “global culture”, in which people more often consume similar goods and services across countries and use a common language of business, English. These changes, according to Todaro and Smith (2003:510), “facilitate economic integration and in turn are further promoted by it”. The growing interconnection of all kinds across national governments, firms, and directly between peoples is a process that affects everyone globally and so far seems more visible in the developed countries. But globalization can in many ways have a greater impact on people in developing countries.

Globalization carries benefits and opportunities as well as costs and risks. This is true for all peoples, for whom the stakes are much higher. The popular image of globalization is that it is an up-down process that establishes a single global system that imprints itself on all parts of the world. Globalization can be categorized into economic,

political and cultural globalization. Culture is usually the first causality of imperialism and globalization. However, this paper attempts to dwell more on globalization and cultural imperialism with emphasis on same-sex marriage laws in Nigeria. A new law in Nigeria, signed by the former President Jonathan without announcement, has made it illegal for gay people to even hold a meeting.

The same Sex Marriage Prohibition Act also criminalizes homosexual clubs, associations and organizations, with penalties of up to 14 years in jail. The act has drawn international condemnation from countries such as the US and Britain. Some gay Nigerians have already fled the country because of intolerance of their sexual persuasion, and more are considering leaving, if the new law is enforced, human rights activist Olumide Makanjuola said. But Nigeria law reflects a highly religious and conservative society that considers homosexuality a deviation. Nigeria is one of 38 African countries “about 70% of the continent “that have laws persecuting gay people, according to Amnesty International. The Associated Press obtained a copy of the Same Sex Marriage Prohibition Act, which was signed by former President Goodluck Jonathan and dated January 7, 2014. It was unclear why the law passage has been shrouded in secrecy. The copy obtained from the House of Representatives in Abuja, the Nigerian capital, showed it was signed by lawmakers and senators unanimously on December 17, 2013, though no announcement was made. The former US Secretary of State, John Kerry said “the US was deeply concerned by a law that dangerously restricts freedom of assembly, association and expression for all Nigerians”. Former Nigeria colonizer Britain said: “The UK opposes any form of discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation”. A statement from the spokesperson for the British High Commission, traditionally not identified by name, said the law infringes upon fundamental rights of expression and association that are guaranteed by the Nigerian Constitution and by international agreements to which Nigeria is a party.

The British government in the year (2013) threatened to cut aid to African countries that violate the rights of gay and Lesbian citizens. However, British aid remains quite small in oil-rich Nigeria, one of the top crude suppliers to the U.S. Washington-based Human Rights first urged Former President Barack Obama to consider all avenue for response, saying leaders such as Ugandan President, Yoweri Museveni, will be watching. This law threatens the very Livelihood of gay people and allies in Nigeria, and sets a dangerous precedent for persecution and violence against minorities throughout the region; said the organization Shawn Gaylord. The motivation for the Nigerian law is unclear, given that the country already has one making homosexual illegal.

Thus, the national legislators should make laws to preserve the society. The power and responsibility of the legislators is limited to that of the public good of the society. It is a power that has no other ends than the preservation of the society and therefore do not have the right to destroy it. So when the National Assembly legislate any law that is seen to be contrary to natural law, they may be accused of strangulating nature. The implication is that if the same-sex marriage laws which America and other European nations sharply reacted against Nigeria had not been promulgated by their National legislators, man’s procreation and reproductive activity will logically end soonest. The world population will gradually start decreasing and according to some public analysts, by the next 150 years time, no human person will remain on earth

because, for instance, no male can make another male pregnant or a female making another female pregnant to give birth. The paper believes that this idea of homosexuality (same-sex marriage is contrary to God's plan for the human beings on earth). The paper argues that God cannot grants human beings any right or privilege that contradicts his plan on earth which revolves around the whole issue of procreating and multiplying.

The paper is qualitative research which employed exploratory and historical research methods. The secondary sources were used as an instrument for data collection. Therefore, the study was enriched through data information, opinions and views gathered from text books, newspapers, magazines and internets. Simple historical and explanatory methods were used in its analysis.

The objectives of this study are to:

- i. Validate the assumption that Anglo-American reactions to Nigeria -sex law is driven by cultural imperialistic interest.
- ii. Evaluate the impacts of globalization and cultural imperialism linking American attitudes towards Nigeria government on the same-sex marriage ban.

### **Definition of Key Concepts**

**Globalization:** The word globalization has been defined by different people and scholars from different perspectives. Heywood (2002:138) defines globalization as "the emergence of a complex web of interconnectedness that means that our lives are increasingly shaped by events that occur and decisions that are made, at a great distance from us". But Steger (1961), Sargent (2009), characterize globalization as a multidimensional set of social processes that create, multiply, stretch, and intensify world-wide social interdependencies and exchange while at the same time fostering on people a growing awareness of deepening connections between the local and the distant.

This definition makes clear that although economic relationships may be the basis of globalization, it is the impacts of the process that are most important. According to Tadaro and Smith (2003:510) globalization also refers "to an emerging global culture in which people more often consume similar goods and services across countries and use of common language of business". For some, the term globalization suggest exciting business opportunities, more rapid growth of knowledge and innovation, or the prospect of world too interdependent to engage in war. However, the above definitions highlight the central features of globalization, that geographical distance is of declining relevance, and that territorial boundaries, such as those between nation-states, are becoming less significant.

**Culture:** The term culture has a number of different meanings, all of them valid for some uses. Sociologists take a much broader view of the term. For them, culture refers to the total lifestyle of a people, including all of the ideas, values, knowledge, behaviours, and material objects that they share (Greertz, 1973; Kroeber Kluckbohn, 1953 and Sullivan, 1998). According to Onyenwigwe (2006:27), culture refers to "the totality of the way of life of a people. It encompasses their language, their way of dressing, their way of eating etc". In the words of Shepard (1981), "culture consist of the humanly created physical objects and the patterns of thinking, feeling and behaving that are passed from generation

to generation among members of a society". More concisely, culture is a society's total way of life.

The above definition is compatible with the views of Haralambos and Heald (1980), who argue that culture determines, to a large extent "how members of a society think and feel, it directs their outlook on life".

In general, the concept of culture refers to that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, traditions and other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society (Nigro, 1973).

Drawing from the different definitions of the term, culture, the various elements of culture fall into two general categories: material culture and non-material culture.

**Material Culture:** These consist of all the physical objects, or artifacts, made or used by people, such as canoes, stone clubs, jet airplanes, and skyscrapers, clothes etc.

**Non-Material Culture:** These consist of those things that have no physical existence, such as language, ideas, knowledge and behaviours. Both material and non-material culture are closely inter-related. Sociologists and anthropologists rely heavily on the interactions between material and non-material culture in studying societies.

**Cultural Globalization:** Having vividly clarified the concepts of globalization and culture above, it is fundamentally important to explain the idea of cultural globalization.

Cultural globalization is the process whereby information, commodities and images that have been produced in one part of the world enter into a global flow that tends to "flatten out" cultural differences between nations, regions and individuals (Heywood 2002).

Cultural globalization is a process whereby the United States of America and other European nations project their culture and make the peripherian nations to inculcate the same with the belief that it is superior to theirs. By this orientation Africa, for example, and particularly Nigeria become more American and more European than the Americans and Europeans themselves. This is what political economists of the Neo-Marxian hue refer to as cultural imperialism.

**Imperialism:** Various authors and scholars have defined imperialism according to their perception of reality, their ideological orientation or their mindset.

Langer (1965:67) defines imperialism as "the rule or control; political or economic, direct or indirect of one state, nation or people over other similar group... the disposition, urge or striving to establish such rule or control".

While Ake 1981:20 states that imperialism is:

The outward drive of certain peoples...to build empire-both former colonies and privileged positions in markets, protected sources of materials and extended opportunities for profitable employment of labour... (resulting from) and unequal economic relationship between states, not simply the inequality of large and small, rich and poor trading partners, but the inequality of political and economic dependence of the latter on the former.

Writers and Scholars of Marxist persuasion focus mainly on the economic variables of imperialism. The term “imperialism” is inextricably linked with the concepts of capitalism, colonialism and neo-colonialism in respect of their common implication and consequences, as well as their evolutionary interconnectedness. Imperialism has often been used to refer to territorial expansion embarked upon by many nations, both old and new, in conquering and subduing other nations through military conquest and other means which in more recent time has led to colonialism (Awofeso, 2014:12).

Imperialism, whether in its political economic or military form, is known to have affected negatively both the political and economic development of new nations including Nigeria whom for reason of exploitation were subject to prolonged period of colonialism.

**Gay Marriage:** Gay simple means homosexual or attracting homosexual desires. In other words, gay means same sex romantic and/or sexual relationship. The word is used in a loose sense to mean *lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT)* relationship.

**Human Rights:** Wikipedia defines human rights as moral principles that set out certain standards of human behaviour, and are regularly protected as legal rights in national and international law. They are commonly understood as inalienable fundamental rights to which a person is inherently entitled simply because he or she is a human being. Human rights are thus conceived as universal (applicable everywhere) and egalitarian (the same for every-one).

**Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Rights:** Sexual orientation and gender identity rights relate to the expression of sexual orientation and gender identity based on the right to respect for private life and the right not to be discriminated against on the ground of “other status” as defined in various human rights conventions, such as article 17 and 26 in the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966 and article 8 and article 14 in the European Convention on Human Rights.

### Theoretical Framework

Given the main topic of this paper, two mutually exclusive theoretical paradigms are in order for a comprehensive analysis. One is the Marxian theory of domination two, structural theory of imperialism. Resting on Charles Darwins theory of survival of the fittest, Walter Begehot wrote in his book. *Physics and Politics (1972)*: That in every particular state of the world, those nations which are strongest tend to prevail over the others, and in certain marked peculiarities the strongest tend to be the best. This implies that some races are inferior, while others are superior and therefore destined to rule. It was the same notion of race superiority that impelled Adolf Hitler to embark upon his mad attempt to subjugate the world and establish German rule for 1000 years, the so-called thousand years of German Reich.

Racial superiority are consequent necessity for the powerful to subjugate the weak was clearly stated in Adolf Hitler’s *book Mein Kampf* which hit the world in 1924 like Niccole Machiavellians *Prince* did in 1513 or Karl Marx’s *Communist Manifesto* in 1848. It is in this vein, that James Brice said that “every man is a wolf to every other man. It is natural for man to assert himself as strong, better or greater than his fellow

man, and avails himself of any opportunity to prove it. These innate traits in man when exhibited on a national scale could impel a state to engage in imperialism (Chikendu, 2004:23).

Seen from the imperialistic framework, America and other European nations support for same-sex manages is trying to prove their superiority and dominance over Nigeria. Americans and other Europeans who belong to the Caucasian race characterized by white-skin regard themselves as the superior race in terms of their culture, civilization and technological advancement and consequently arrogate to themselves the power and duty to dictate and rule other races of mankind. They regard their imperial activities as a “mission” based on humanitarianism and altruism. Imperialism in their thought was burden which they had to carry for the benefit of all mankind.

**Anglo–American Response to Nigeria Same-Sex Marriage Law or Same Sex Prohibition Act 2014:** Nigeria’s same-sex marriage ban has attracted a lot of criticism from Anglo–American governments. These criticisms anchored on what they see as Nigeria Violation of Universal Declaration of Human Right Law.

For example Secretary of States in Obama Administration, John Kerry said that “the United States was deeply concerned by the new measures” adding that “Beyond even prohibition of same-sex marriage, this law dangerously restricts freedom of assembly... and expression for all Nigerians. It is inconsistent with Nigeria’s international obligations and undermines. Democratic reforms and human rights protections in practical terms and speaking through its ambassador in Nigeria, James Entwistle noted that the U.S government plans to scale down its support for HIV/AIDS and anti-malaria programs in Nigeria.

On its part, Britain and some other European countries have threatened to cut aids to counties towing the paths of Nigeria and Uganda in their homosexual legislations. But it should first be noted 38 out of 54 countries in Africa prohibits same sex marriage, though Nigeria’s legislation is seen by Britain as the harshest for attracting 14 –years jail term.

UN human rights chief, Navi Pillay noted that “Rarely have I seen a piece of legislation that in so few paragraphs directly violates so many basic universal human rights”. (Washington Post: Editorial February 10, 2014).

Mr. Pillay went further to urge both Washington and London to make former President Jonathan know that he would not be welcomed in those cities until the law was repealed.

**Negative Impacts of Globalization on Nigerian Culture:** Legitimate and understandable concerns about globalization are based on the fact that the present waves of globalization are extra-ordinarily uneven in their impact. Those areas worse affected, such as Nigeria, are still reeling from the effects. The argument that there will be widespread general benefits from at least some form of globalization today must rest on what is different about this current wave.

To the anti-globalization movement, globalization equals “Americanization and Europeanization and is about power: it means a new colonialization in which western countries support those who support them. From this point of view, although globalization suggests that it will produce inclusion in the world economy, it in fact produces exclusion from the world economy.

Driven in part by the growth of transnational companies and the emergence of global commodities, cultural globalization is fuelled by the so-called information revolution, the spread of satellite communication, telecommunications networks, information technology and the internet, and global media corporations. However, culture both serves and constraints the forces of globalization. In addition to the ubiquity of Hollywood movies, Nike jogging shoes and star back coffee houses, selling goods across the world have adversely affected the Nigerian cultures and social practices (Heywood 2002).

For examples, all around the cities and communities in Nigeria we observed that of the average Nigerian dramatically changed reflecting the western styles. The local languages, customs and traditions for which each ethnic group is known for as their cultural identities are gradually going extinct. The average families, no matter their level of poverty dwell on foreign and European fast foods, ignoring the locally grown food items with natural nutrients. These are the negative consequences of globalization. In the word of Heywood (2002), the popular image of globalization is that it is a top-down process, the establishment of a single global system that imprints itself on parts of the world. In this view, globalization is linked to homogenization as cultural, social, economic and political diversity are destroyed in a world in which we all watch the same television programmes, buy the same commodities, eat the same food, support the same sport stars and follow the antics of the same celebrities. Nevertheless, globalization goes hand in hand with multiculturalism.

The effects of this development in Nigeria and indeed Africa could be attributed to the following:

i. **The Fear or Threat of Homogenization:** The fear or threat of homogenization especially when it is perceived as a form of imperialism, provokes cultural and political resistance. This can lead to a resurgence of interest in declining languages and minority cultures as well as a backlash against globalization.

ii. **Complex Social and Cultural Diversity:** Rather than simple bringing about a global monoculture, globalization has in some ways fashioned more complex patterns of social and cultural diversity in developing and developed states alike. In developing states, western consumer goods and images have been absorbed into more traditional cultural practices through a process of indigenization.

iii. **Influence of Social Media:** The new electronic age has impacted negatively on lives of average Nigerians. The phenomenal explosion of modern communication gadgets has robbed the people the benefits of social interactions. Many people spend time watching television, listening to music on Ipads, and reading chats on their smart phones rather than spending quality time interacting with family and friends.

Another area where the social media have impacted negatively in the social lives of Nigeria is the loss of their sense of human sensitivity. People no longer have any qualm of conscience today using their smart phones to take photo shots at accident scenes when they should rather rush to help the accident victims.

As Albert Einstein predicted a few decades ago, we are already raising “a generation of idiots” (Ojeifo, in the Guardian Friday, February 12, 2016, p. 13). When we look around Nigeria environment, what do we see? People are glued to their mobile phones everywhere whether eating with friends, sitting in a car, during religious services or even

when crossing the road. This is an aspect of the negative impact of globalization through the revolution of social media.

iv. **Poor Reading Culture:** Over the years, astute and curious observers of the social trend have complained about the dying culture of reading in Nigeria. This situation is worrisome among young people who spend a lot of time on social media looking for ready made materials in the internets instead of reading books and newspapers. The paper believes that it was this great concern that prompted the immediate past administration of President Goodluck Jonathan to launch the Bring Back Book (BBB) literary initiative in December 2010.

Like many other well-meaning national projects, BBB has died. The simple reason is that Nigeria has a penchant for ineptitude when it comes to conceiving and executing long-term national projects.

At present, education sector is comatose. Many years of bad policies, nepotism and corruption have given rise to a system in reverse condition. It is this vicious cycle that has made millions of university graduates jobless, without the cognitive, analytical and psychosocial tools to connect and collaborate in a globalized work environment. Many schools in Nigeria's have become citadels of excellence and success without pain without work and without toil. It is in this perspective that Ojeifo noted in the Guardian Friday February 12, (2016, p. 13) that Nigerian society is "a republic of mediocrity, a distorted space where excellence and hard work have no positive correlation with success".

No matter how sophisticated modern technology becomes and spread through globalization, Nigeria will always need books. When people have something serious to say, they put it in a book. In the past it was said, if you must hide something from an African, put it in book. The impression was that Africans don't read.

Up till today the impression still persists. This paper suggests that Nigeria should urgently; need to ignite a book revolution in the country.

v. **Less regard for indigenous social values:** A deeper investigation today shows many young people in Nigeria are living with warped values. A lot of young people are driven by the celebrity – mania. They love to live life on the fast lane. They love everything from fast foods to fast cars. Nigerians no longer have the patience, self-discipline, persistence and the broad cultivation to train their minds and to open it up to the horizon of wisdom and knowledge. Instead of investing their time and resources in profitable ventures, they rather spend them on frivolous activities.

It is therefore, not by accident that globalization has been called the imperialism of the 1990s - what is different between imperialism and globalization is just the latter's spread of expansion.

### **Findings**

From the wide range of research carried out in this study, the paper finds that globalization cum cultural imperialism has so emasculated African personality and pervaded their psyche that most of Africa countries do not have any confidence in themselves as equal to and capable of marching along with America and her European allies. Africa, and indeed Nigeria place no value in any thing and indigenous to them. Most Anglophone and Francophone citizens despise their language and uphold the language of America and that of their European colonial masters. An educated person is he who can speak fluently any of the foreign languages.



The paper found that globalization has negatively affected the African cultural values. Thus, the mode of dressing today, the choice of food, the table manner and general etiquette are deeply influenced and guided by the American and European patterns. Indeed, globalization has made Africans culturally rootless, disoriented and anomic. The educational system, legal and political practices, marriage and family life and in fact, the economic systems are profoundly affected. Thus the original African mode and values have become thoroughly Americanized and Europeanized.

The study found that the economic powers of America and her European allies is the ground upon which same-sex marriage laws of 2014 received serious attacks against Nigeria because she depend on them for aids and other technical assistance. The paper then finds that the history of HIV/AIDS shows that it started among homosexuals in America in the early 80s. According to *Morbidity* and *Mortality* weekly Report MMWR, "On June 5, 1981, MMWR Published a report of lives cases of *Pneumocystis Carinii Pneumonia* (PCP) among previously healthy young men in Los Angeles. All of the men were described as "homosexuals".

The Nigerian Medical Association and confirmed that there are medical complications associated with same-sex marriage relationship because it is an abnormal way of life.

The paper also found that before this law was enacted and assented to homosexuality was already unlawful and criminalized in Nigeria under the criminal and penal codes. According to the Guardian family law of Tuesday January 28, 2013, the criminal code characterizes homosexuality as *offences against morality* while the penal code refers to it as *unnatural and indecent offences*. Specifically, under section 2014 of the criminal code "any person who (1) has carnal knowledge of any person against the order of nature, or (2) has carnal knowledge of animals; or (3) permits a male person to have carnal of him or her against the order of nature, is guilty of a felony".

According to statistics, homosexual behaviour is illegal in 76 countries, and is punishable by execution in 7 countries mostly in the Arab Peninsula. The criminalisation of private, consensual adult sexual relations, especially in countries where corporal or capital punishment is involved, is one of the primary concerns of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) human rights advocates. Even USA, only 17 out of 50 states have legalized gay marriage while 33 others refuse to legalize it. (The Guardian 28 January, 2013). So, it is not even universal in the acclaimed most democratic country in the world.

According to the guardian editorial report of January, 22, 2014, "under the French declaration of the Rights of man and of the citizen of 1789, "liberty consists in the freedom to do everything which injures no one else, hence the exercise of the natural rights of each man has no limits except those which assure to the other members of the society the enjoyment of the same rights". The paper therefore, discovers that an attempt to force Nigeria or any other Africa country to accept the gay culture is akin to slavery; and slavery is the biggest evil against human rights for which western nations including U.S. have been repeatedly guilty, colonialism; imperialism and outright slavery are crimes for which these western countries still owe an apology to Africans.

Finally, the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human rights 1948 (UDHR) enshrines universal rights that apply to all humans equally, whichever geographical location, state, race or culture they belong to.

**Recommendations**

From the research carried out in this study, the paper thus recommends:

- i. The vigour and zeal with which the Presidency and National Assembly show sincere interest in championing decency and decent behaviour, they as well should take such noble causes as child-labour laws, insecurity, terrorism, economic and political federalism, sovereign national conference, child-trafficking and the funding of educational and medical institutions.
- ii. The paper also recommends threat from U.S and Europe should not be allowed to reach a degree from which they threaten the Nigerian or African identity, that uniquely African age-long conviction of what is true and what is false, what is good and what is evil, what is properly human and what is contrary to man's very nature.
- iii. Same-sex marriage relationship is unnatural and injurious to the sensibilities of the society and in fact human race will go into extinction if every country legalizes gay marriage.
- iv. Human right without limit is a recipe for the destruction of any society. The culture and morality of a people must be taken into consideration because it is to remember that culture and morality are intricately linked.

**Conclusion**

Looking at the globalization as a new phenomenon and imperialism as an offshoot of colonialism, the paper considered that the same-sex prohibition Acts are good reflecting the socio-cultural peculiarities of the Nigerian and duly aimed at engineering the society in line with decent moral precepts that are acceptable in aggregate of Nigerian peoples.

What we need to guard against is poor and uncontrolled enforcement. The human rights desks in the different police formations across these two countries should be re-engineered to withstand the temptation of trampling upon the rights of individuals in the name of fight against same-sex relationships and marriage. Advocacy groups should be allowed to express their views without practicing homosexuality. Nigeria should call the bluff of imperialist powers that want to continue their cultural imposition of their lifestyles.

No amount of pressure, propaganda or blackmail from America and Europe could sway over Africa on this matter of life and death. Pervasive as it is, there is no doubt that Nigeria, indeed Africa, violently resent the abhorrent conduct by enacting the anti-gay legislations. Nigeria has shown their leadership positions in Africa. Other African countries should take a cue from her and be prepared to counter the backlash. If American and European cultures tolerate same-sex marriage, Nigeria culture does not. America and indeed the West should appreciate this fact.

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