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Global Communication: Paradox of Integration and Fragmentation (A Postcolonial Perspective)

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Abstract: This article analyzes the paradox of contemporary global communication from a post-colonial perspective, namely how communication technology and digital media simultaneously drive global integration while generating social, cultural, and political fragmentation. On the one hand, the internet, social media, and digital platforms expand cross-border connectivity, accelerate information exchange, and shape the global public sphere. On the other hand, the structure of global communication remains dominated by states and corporations from the Global North, thus reproducing colonial inequalities in a new form often referred to as digital colonialism. This research uses qualitative methods with a critical literature approach based on post-colonial theory, global communication, and the political economy of media. The results show that global integration does not occur neutrally but is shaped by power relations that determine who produces, distributes, and controls the flow of information. Fragmentation emerges through digital polarization, platform algorithms, media nationalism, and local cultural resistance to global homogenization. This article concludes that 21st-century global communication is an arena of contestation between integration and fragmentation, where colonial legacies continue to influence the structure of international communication. Therefore, a more inclusive, decolonial, and equitable global communication governance is needed.

Keywords: Global Communication, Post-Colonial, Integration, Fragmentation, Digital Colonialism.

INTRODUCTION

The twenty-first century has witnessed a profound transformation in global communication driven by rapid advances in information and communication technologies (ICTs), the expansion of internet connectivity, and the proliferation of digital platforms. Communication has evolved from conventional mass media into a complex digital ecosystem characterized by instantaneous information exchange, transnational networks, and algorithmically mediated interactions (Thussu, 2019). This transformation has strengthened global interconnectedness and fostered the emergence of a network society in which information flows transcend geographical boundaries and facilitate the formation of global

public spheres (Castells, 2010). Likewise, McLuhan's notion of the "global village" anticipated how communication technologies could compress space and time, enabling unprecedented levels of interaction among societies (McLuhan, 1994).

Despite these integrative developments, contemporary global communication has also generated new forms of fragmentation. Digital platforms that facilitate worldwide connectivity have simultaneously intensified political polarization, misinformation, algorithmic bias, and ideological division, creating fragmented communication environments shaped by filter bubbles and echo chambers (Fuchs, 2024; Pariser, 2011). Consequently, global communication is characterized by a paradox in which integration and fragmentation emerge simultaneously rather than as opposing outcomes.

This paradox cannot be understood solely through technological change because contemporary communication infrastructures are embedded within broader political and economic power relations. The world's dominant digital platforms, including Google, Meta, Microsoft, Amazon, and X, remain concentrated in the Global North, enabling a limited number of corporations to influence information flows, platform governance, and digital infrastructures on a global scale (Srnicek, 2017). As Schiller (1992) argued in the context of communication and cultural domination, technological development is inseparable from unequal structures of power, suggesting that contemporary digital communication continues to reproduce historical asymmetries in new forms.

To explain these inequalities, scholars have increasingly adopted postcolonial theory as a critical framework for examining global communication. Rather than viewing colonialism as a historical phenomenon that ended with political independence, postcolonial scholarship argues that colonial relations persist through systems of representation, knowledge production, and institutional power (Ashcroft et al., 2002). Said's concept of Orientalism, together with Bhabha's notion of hybridity and Spivak's concept of subalternity, provides an important theoretical foundation for understanding how identities, cultures, and knowledge continue to be negotiated within asymmetrical global structures (Bhabha, 1994; Said, 1979; Spivak, 1988).

The relevance of postcolonial theory has become increasingly evident in the digital era through concepts such as digital colonialism, data colonialism, platform imperialism, and algorithmic colonialism. These perspectives argue that contemporary forms of domination are increasingly exercised through the ownership of digital infrastructures, platforms, data resources, and artificial intelligence rather than through territorial occupation (Kwet, 2019). Recent scholarship further demonstrates that digital colonialism should be understood as an evolving intellectual framework explaining how digital technologies reproduce historical colonial logics through unequal control of technological infrastructures, data, and knowledge production (Nothias, 2025). Closely related to this process is data colonialism, whereby everyday human activities are continuously transformed into data that can be extracted, commodified, and monetized by powerful technology corporations, reinforcing global inequalities (Couldry & Mejias, 2019b). These developments have also stimulated growing debates on data justice, emphasizing the need for more equitable governance of digital resources and algorithmic systems (Dencik et al., 2022).

The concentration of digital power has become even more significant with the rapid expansion of artificial intelligence and platform governance. Platform corporations increasingly shape information visibility, public discourse, and cultural production through algorithmic systems, while AI models are predominantly developed using datasets that reflect Western languages, values, and epistemological assumptions (Jin, 2015). Recent studies argue that this asymmetry has intensified new forms of algorithmic dependence and digital colonialism, particularly for countries in the Global South whose technological infrastructures and AI capabilities remain highly dependent on actors from the Global North (Ahmed, 2026; Salami, 2024).

Alongside these developments, digital sovereignty has emerged as an increasingly important response to technological dependence. Governments across different regions are seeking greater control over data governance, AI regulation, and digital infrastructures to reduce dependence on dominant global platforms (Bradford, 2023). Recent scholarship further suggests that digital sovereignty should not merely be understood as regulatory intervention but also as a relational process through which states negotiate platform power while attempting to reshape global communication governance (Bannerman, 2024; de Freitas, 2025). These developments indicate that global communication is increasingly characterized by competing forms of integration, fragmentation, and technological governance.

Although previous studies have examined globalization, digital communication, platform governance, and digital colonialism from technological or political-economic perspectives, relatively limited attention has been devoted to explaining how integration and fragmentation are simultaneously produced through the same digital communication structures from a postcolonial perspective (Mejias & Couldry, 2024). Existing studies often emphasize either the opportunities created by global connectivity or the risks associated with digital inequality, while paying less attention to the coexistence of these seemingly contradictory dynamics within contemporary communication systems. Addressing this gap, this article examines the paradox of integration and fragmentation in global communication through a postcolonial framework, demonstrating how digital colonialism, data colonialism, platform imperialism, and algorithmic power collectively reshape the contemporary global communication order.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research design grounded in a critical postcolonial perspective to examine how contemporary global communication simultaneously produces processes of integration and fragmentation through digital infrastructures, platform governance, data extraction, and artificial intelligence. Rather than measuring causal relationships, the study seeks to interpret the historical, political, and epistemic structures underlying contemporary communication systems. A critical interpretive methodology is adopted because it enables the exploration of hidden power relations embedded within technological and communication environments (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018). Consistent with the tradition of critical communication research, communication is understood not as a neutral process of information exchange but as a field of power shaped by unequal relationships between the Global North and the Global South (McChesney, 2015).

Theoretical Framework

The analytical framework integrates classical postcolonial theory with recent scholarship on digital communication. Said's concept of Orientalism, Bhabha's notion of hybridity, and Spivak's concept of subalternity provide the theoretical foundation for examining representation, cultural negotiation, and epistemic exclusion within global communication (Bhabha, 1994; Said, 1979; Spivak, 1988). These perspectives are extended through contemporary concepts of digital colonialism, data colonialism, platform imperialism, and algorithmic colonialism, which explain how historical colonial logics continue to operate through digital infrastructures, data governance, and artificial intelligence (Kwet, 2019; Nothias, 2025).

Data Sources and Collection

The study relies exclusively on secondary qualitative data collected through a systematic literature review. Sources include peer-reviewed journal articles indexed in Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar, together with reports published by international organizations

such as the ITU, UNESCO, OECD, UNCTAD, the World Bank, and the Internet Governance Forum. Policy documents and reports from major technology companies were also examined to contextualize recent developments in platform governance, digital sovereignty, and AI regulation.

The document selection followed a structured review procedure. An initial literature search was conducted using combinations of keywords including "global communication," "postcolonial communication," "digital colonialism," "data colonialism," "platform governance," "algorithmic governance," "digital sovereignty," and "artificial intelligence." Publications were retrieved from the selected databases and institutional repositories before being screened based on predefined eligibility criteria.

The inclusion criteria comprised: (1) peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, and institutional reports; (2) publications directly addressing global communication, digital governance, postcolonial communication, or emerging digital power relations; (3) English-language publications; and (4) studies published between 2022 and 2026, while retaining seminal theoretical works that provide the conceptual foundations of postcolonial communication theory.

The exclusion criteria included publications lacking clear academic or institutional credibility, duplicated records across databases, opinion articles without analytical evidence, and studies unrelated to communication, media, or digital governance. After the screening process, only sources that demonstrated direct relevance to the research objectives were retained for analysis. This systematic selection procedure enhances the transparency and reproducibility of the literature review process (Creswell & Poth, 2018; de Freitas, 2025).

Data Analysis

The collected literature was analyzed using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Thematic Analysis. CDA was employed to examine how academic, institutional, and policy discourses construct narratives surrounding digital transformation, platform governance, and artificial intelligence while revealing the power relations embedded within those narratives (Fairclough, 2015). Thematic Analysis followed Braun and Clarke's six-stage framework to identify recurring patterns across the literature (Braun & Clarke, 2022). The analysis generated five interrelated themes: (1) global communication integration; (2) digital colonialism and technological dependency; (3) data extraction and surveillance capitalism; (4) platform governance and communicative power; and (5) algorithmic and AI-driven inequalities. These themes were subsequently interpreted through a postcolonial perspective to explain how integration and fragmentation coexist within contemporary communication systems. Recent scholarship on data justice and algorithmic dependence further informed the interpretation of these themes by highlighting emerging forms of digital inequality and epistemic exclusion (Ahmed, 2026; Dencik et al., 2022).

Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations

The credibility of the study was enhanced through source and theoretical triangulation by integrating evidence from academic publications, international reports, policy documents, and corporate materials. Analytical transparency and systematic interpretation were maintained throughout the research process to strengthen methodological rigor (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Because the study relies exclusively on publicly available secondary sources, no human participants were involved, and therefore issues related to informed consent or participant confidentiality did not arise.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Global Communication as a Paradox of Integration and Fragmentation

The findings demonstrate that contemporary global communication is characterized by a fundamental paradox. On the one hand, digital technologies have significantly expanded global connectivity, enabling information, capital, culture, and ideas to circulate rapidly across national boundaries. On the other hand, these same technologies have generated new forms of inequality, technological dependence, and political fragmentation. Evidence drawn from recent developments involving Google, Meta, TikTok, OpenAI, Starlink, and emerging AI governance initiatives indicates that integration and fragmentation are not contradictory outcomes but mutually reinforcing dimensions of the contemporary communication order (Castells, 2010).

A comparative examination of major digital platforms further illustrates how global integration simultaneously produces distinct forms of communicative power and fragmentation. Meta and TikTok, for example, both facilitate transnational communication and cultural exchange, yet they exercise platform governance in different ways. Meta's ecosystem relies heavily on integrated social networking, personalized advertising, and cross-platform data aggregation across Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp, thereby consolidating extensive user profiling and commercial surveillance. In contrast, TikTok's recommendation system is driven primarily by algorithmic content personalization through its "For You" feed, where user visibility is determined largely by AI-based behavioral prediction rather than established social networks. Although both platforms intensify global connectivity, their governance models differ in how user data are collected, algorithmically processed, and translated into communicative influence. These differences demonstrate that digital colonialism is not exercised through a single technological model but through multiple platform-specific mechanisms of data extraction and algorithmic governance (Couldry & Mejias, 2019b; Jin, 2025; Kwet, 2019).

A similar pattern can be observed in the development of generative artificial intelligence. Google integrates AI into its long-established search infrastructure, enabling algorithmic mediation of information retrieval at a global scale, whereas OpenAI's ChatGPT increasingly functions as a conversational interface through which users generate, interpret, and synthesize knowledge. While Google's communicative power is rooted in organizing access to information, OpenAI shapes communication by influencing how information is produced and articulated through large language models. Both corporations therefore occupy different positions within the emerging AI ecosystem, yet each contributes to the concentration of computational resources, proprietary datasets, and algorithmic authority within a limited number of Global North technology firms. These comparative cases reinforce the argument that contemporary global communication is simultaneously characterized by expanding global integration and increasingly differentiated forms of digital power.

From a postcolonial perspective, this paradox reflects the persistence of historical power asymmetries within digital environments. Rather than eliminating colonial inequalities, digital technologies frequently reconfigure them through platform ownership, data extraction, and algorithmic governance. Consequently, global communication should be understood as a contested arena where connectivity coexists with exclusion, and global integration develops alongside new forms of dependency and marginalization (Nothias, 2025; Thussu, 2019).

Recent debates on digital sovereignty further reinforce this argument. Governments increasingly adopt data localization policies, regulate cross-border data flows, and formulate national AI strategies to reduce dependence on dominant technology corporations. While these initiatives seek to strengthen national control over digital infrastructures, they also contribute to the emergence of a more fragmented global communication environment characterized by competing governance regimes and technological standards. Rather than signalling the decline of globalization, these developments illustrate the simultaneous expansion of global

connectivity and the reconfiguration of communicative power through platform governance and digital sovereignty (Bannerman, 2024; de Freitas, 2025).

Digital Platforms and the Intensification of Global Integration

One of the clearest manifestations of communication integration is the growing influence of global digital platforms. Companies such as Google, Meta, Microsoft, TikTok, and OpenAI have established communication ecosystems connecting billions of users across geographical, cultural, and political boundaries. Their platforms facilitate transnational communication, accelerate knowledge exchange, and reshape patterns of cultural production and consumption on a global scale.

Meta's ecosystem illustrates this transformation through social networking services and short-video formats such as Reels, which intensify cross-border interaction and cultural exchange. Likewise, Google's search engine and YouTube have become central infrastructures for accessing information, education, and public knowledge, while TikTok has emerged as a dominant platform for digital creativity, particularly among younger generations. Together, these platforms expand participation in global communication by connecting users simultaneously to local, national, and transnational public spheres (Castells, 2013).

The rapid diffusion of generative artificial intelligence has further strengthened this integrative tendency. AI-based systems increasingly support communication, education, professional collaboration, and knowledge production, enabling faster and more interactive forms of global information exchange. However, the benefits of this integration remain unevenly distributed because the development of advanced AI models, cloud infrastructures, and computational resources continues to be concentrated within a limited number of corporations located primarily in the Global North. Consequently, technological integration simultaneously reinforces new patterns of algorithmic dependence and epistemic inequality, particularly for countries in the Global South (Ahmed, 2026; Salami, 2024).

These findings suggest that digital platforms have substantially expanded opportunities for global interaction and participation. Nevertheless, from a postcolonial perspective, integration should not be interpreted as a neutral or universally beneficial process. Instead, the same infrastructures that facilitate worldwide communication also consolidate asymmetrical relationships of technological ownership and communicative power, laying the foundation for the emergence of digital colonialism discussed in the following section.

Digital Colonialism and Technological Dependency

Despite the integrative potential of digital communication, the findings reveal persistent asymmetries in the ownership and governance of digital infrastructures. Critical communication systems, including search engines, cloud computing, software ecosystems, satellite internet, and artificial intelligence, remain concentrated within a small number of technology corporations headquartered primarily in the United States. Google dominates search and digital advertising, Meta controls major social networking ecosystems, Microsoft occupies a strategic position in cloud services and enterprise software, OpenAI has become a leading actor in generative AI, while Starlink increasingly shapes global internet connectivity.

This concentration reflects what Kwet (2019) conceptualizes as digital colonialism, whereby technological dependence reproduces historical patterns of domination through digital infrastructures rather than territorial occupation. More recent scholarship extends this concept by arguing that digital colonialism should be understood as a broader system in which ownership of digital platforms, data infrastructures, and AI ecosystems reproduces colonial logics through technological dependence, infrastructural control, and unequal knowledge production (Nothias, 2025). Similarly, platform imperialism demonstrates how communication infrastructures have become strategic instruments of global power, enabling platform

corporations to shape economic, political, and cultural relations beyond national boundaries (Jin, 2025).

The Global South occupies a particularly vulnerable position within this structure. Many developing countries remain dependent on foreign-owned communication infrastructures, cloud services, software platforms, satellite networks, and AI technologies. Such dependence constrains digital sovereignty, limits technological autonomy, and increases exposure to external political and economic influence (Couldry & Mejias, 2019b; de Freitas, 2025). These dynamics are increasingly evident in emerging smart-city initiatives and digital infrastructure projects, where technological innovation frequently coexists with new forms of external dependency and digital neo-colonialism (Mouton & Burns, 2021).

The findings indicate that digital colonialism operates through three interconnected mechanisms: infrastructure dependency, platform dependency, and knowledge dependency. Infrastructure dependency arises when communication systems rely on technologies developed and controlled externally. Platform dependency occurs as public communication increasingly takes place within privately owned digital ecosystems, while knowledge dependency emerges when the production, circulation, and validation of information become concentrated within institutions and corporations located predominantly in the Global North. From Said's perspective, these asymmetries extend beyond communication infrastructures to shape representation, knowledge production, and the construction of global narratives, reinforcing unequal epistemic authority within the contemporary communication order (Said, 1979).

Overall, the findings suggest that technological integration has not displaced colonial relations but rather transformed them into new forms of digital dependency. Consequently, global communication infrastructures simultaneously expand worldwide connectivity while consolidating the structural conditions through which communicative authority, technological power, and epistemic control become increasingly concentrated within a limited number of global platform corporations.

Data Colonialism and the Extraction of Human Experience

The concentration of digital infrastructures naturally extends to the concentration of data. The findings strongly support Couldry and Mejias' argument that data has become the principal resource of contemporary digital capitalism (Couldry & Mejias, 2019b). As Couldry & Mejias (2019a) further argues, data colonialism represents a new historical phase in which everyday human life itself becomes a source of continuous data extraction. Every interaction conducted through Google, Meta, TikTok, OpenAI, and similar platforms, including searches, online communication, geolocation, purchasing behaviour, and digital participation, is transformed into valuable data that can be extracted, analysed, and monetized.

Unlike classical colonialism, which relied upon the extraction of physical resources, data colonialism operates through ordinary digital activities. Individuals voluntarily generate data that are converted into economic assets, creating unprecedented concentrations of informational and economic power. Consequently, users become both participants in global communication and sources of value extraction within platform economies.

This asymmetry is particularly visible across the Global South. Although users in Africa, Latin America, South Asia, and Southeast Asia generate enormous volumes of digital data, the economic benefits derived from these activities remain concentrated within corporations headquartered in North America and other advanced economies. This pattern closely resembles colonial economic structures in which resources extracted from peripheral regions were processed and accumulated within metropolitan centres (Mejias & Couldry, 2024). Recent scholarship further highlights that unequal data extraction is not only an economic issue but also a matter of data justice, since communities generating digital data often possess limited authority over how those data are collected, governed, and utilized (Dencik et al., 2022).

Beyond economic inequality, data colonialism also produces forms of epistemic inequality. Data increasingly shape how societies are represented, governed, and understood, while those controlling data infrastructures exercise growing influence over future knowledge production, algorithmic decision-making, and AI development. As advanced AI systems continue to rely on large-scale datasets dominated by actors from the Global North, existing asymmetries in knowledge production risk becoming institutionalized through algorithmic systems, reinforcing new forms of digital dependence and communicative inequality (Ahmed, 2026; Salami, 2024).

From Spivak's perspective, this development raises a fundamental postcolonial question: can the digital subaltern genuinely speak when the infrastructures through which communication, representation, and knowledge circulate remain governed by external actors? (Spivak, 1988). The findings therefore indicate that data colonialism constitutes not merely an economic process of value extraction but also an epistemic mechanism through which communicative authority, algorithmic governance, and global knowledge hierarchies are continuously reproduced.

Algorithmic Colonialism and the Politics of Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence introduces a new dimension of postcolonial analysis by embedding power within computational systems rather than direct political institutions. Although AI is frequently portrayed as objective and value-neutral, the findings indicate that AI development remains concentrated within a relatively small number of corporations and research institutions located primarily in North America and Western Europe (Noble, 2018).

The rapid expansion of generative AI technologies, including ChatGPT, has fundamentally transformed how individuals access information, produce knowledge, and participate in communication processes. Most advanced AI systems are trained predominantly on datasets reflecting English-language content and Western epistemological traditions. Consequently, AI-generated knowledge may privilege particular worldviews while marginalizing alternative perspectives and local knowledge systems (Birhane, 2020).

This dynamic reflects what scholars increasingly describe as algorithmic colonialism, whereby power operates through computational systems that influence visibility, classification, recommendation, and decision-making rather than through territorial domination alone (Birhane, 2020). Recent studies further argue that algorithmic dependence has become a defining feature of digital colonialism because countries lacking AI infrastructures increasingly rely on technologies designed, trained, and governed elsewhere (Ahmed, 2026). Similar concerns have been raised regarding the unequal participation of the Global South in AI governance, where technological standards and regulatory frameworks continue to be shaped primarily by actors from advanced economies (Nyaaba et al., 2025; Salami, 2024). These developments suggest that algorithmic colonialism extends beyond technological dependence to encompass epistemic dependence. Unless AI governance becomes more inclusive, algorithmic systems may institutionalize existing inequalities by embedding dominant cultural assumptions within global communication infrastructures.

Starlink, Connectivity, and the Ambiguities of Integration

The case of Starlink illustrates the dual dynamics of integration and fragmentation particularly clearly. On one hand, satellite-based internet technologies expand connectivity in remote and underserved regions, increasing participation in global communication networks and reducing geographical barriers to digital inclusion. On the other hand, from a postcolonial perspective, greater connectivity does not necessarily imply greater autonomy. Although access expands, ownership and governance remain concentrated within a privately owned transnational corporation. Consequently, inclusion within global communication networks may

simultaneously deepen technological dependence and reinforce existing asymmetries of digital power.

Digital Sovereignty and the Fragmentation of the Global Internet

The findings reveal growing efforts by governments and regional organizations to reduce technological dependence through digital sovereignty initiatives. Increasingly, states seek greater control over digital infrastructures, data governance, cloud services, and artificial intelligence as concerns regarding platform dominance continue to intensify. The adoption of the EU AI Act, together with comparable regulatory initiatives in India, China, Brazil, and several African countries, illustrates the growing attempt to establish independent governance frameworks for emerging technologies. These developments reflect broader efforts to rebalance platform power and strengthen national or regional control over digital ecosystems (de Freitas, 2025).

However, digital sovereignty also contributes to the fragmentation of the global internet. Data localization policies, competing AI regulations, and divergent technological standards increasingly divide cyberspace into multiple governance regimes, giving rise to what has become known as the splinternet. Rather than representing the opposite of globalization, fragmentation emerges as a consequence of competing efforts to govern an increasingly interconnected digital environment. From a postcolonial perspective, digital sovereignty therefore represents both resistance and contradiction. While it enables states, particularly in the Global South, to challenge historical technological dependency, it may also strengthen domestic surveillance and restrict transnational information flows. Recent scholarship similarly argues that sovereignty should be understood not simply as state control but as a negotiated process involving governments, technology corporations, and civil society in shaping digital governance (Bannerman, 2024; Roberts & Montoya, 2022).

Reassessing the Postcolonial Framework

The findings reaffirm that postcolonial theory remains highly relevant for interpreting contemporary global communication, but they also suggest the need to reconceptualize postcolonial analysis within digitally mediated communication systems. While Said's concept of representation continues to explain how communication infrastructures shape knowledge production and global narratives (Said, 1979), the present findings demonstrate that contemporary power operates not only through representation but also through platform ownership, data infrastructures, algorithmic governance, and artificial intelligence. In this context, classical postcolonial theory provides an essential foundation but requires analytical extension to account for emerging forms of digital domination.

This study does not challenge existing scholarship arguing that digital globalization simultaneously produces connectivity and inequality. Previous studies in global communication, political economy of communication, and platform studies have already demonstrated that digital technologies expand global integration while reproducing structural asymmetries (Castells, 2013; Couldry & Hepp, 2017; Fuchs, 2024; Thussu, 2019). Rather, the theoretical contribution of this study lies in explaining these dynamics through a unified postcolonial framework that connects forms of digital power often examined separately in previous literature. Instead of treating digital colonialism, data colonialism, platform imperialism, algorithmic colonialism, and digital sovereignty as distinct analytical concepts, this study demonstrates how they function as interconnected mechanisms within a broader postcolonial communication structure.

The findings further indicate that integration and fragmentation should be understood not merely as parallel consequences of digital globalization but as mutually constitutive processes generated through the same digital infrastructures. Global platforms simultaneously expand

transnational communication while consolidating ownership, data extraction, algorithmic governance, and epistemic authority within a limited number of actors. Consequently, integration itself becomes one of the structural conditions through which new forms of fragmentation, technological dependency, and communicative inequality are reproduced. This relational interpretation extends existing scholarship by explaining not only that connectivity and inequality coexist, but also how they are continuously co-produced through interconnected infrastructures of digital communication.

Accordingly, the principal contribution of this study is not simply to reaffirm that digital globalization generates both integration and inequality, but to propose an integrated postcolonial analytical framework that explains the structural relationships among platform governance, data extraction, algorithmic power, and digital sovereignty. By positioning these phenomena within a single postcolonial perspective, the study offers a more comprehensive explanation of how contemporary communication systems simultaneously produce global connectivity and reproduce historical asymmetries in technological, communicative, and epistemic power..

CONCLUSION

This study has examined the paradox of contemporary global communication through a postcolonial perspective, demonstrating that digital communication is simultaneously characterized by processes of integration and fragmentation. While digital technologies, global platforms, and artificial intelligence have significantly expanded cross-border connectivity, knowledge exchange, and participation, these developments have also intensified structural inequalities through the concentration of digital infrastructures, platform ownership, data extraction, and algorithmic governance. Consequently, integration and fragmentation should not be understood as opposing trajectories but as mutually constitutive outcomes produced by the same digital communication systems. The findings show that digital colonialism extends beyond technological dependence to encompass interconnected forms of infrastructure dependency, platform dependency, knowledge dependency, and algorithmic power. Data colonialism, platform imperialism, and algorithmic colonialism collectively demonstrate how historical asymmetries between the Global North and the Global South have been reconfigured within contemporary digital environments. At the same time, growing efforts to establish digital sovereignty indicate that states increasingly seek to challenge these asymmetrical relationships, although such initiatives also contribute to the fragmentation of global digital governance.

Theoretically, this study contributes to global communication scholarship by integrating classical postcolonial theory with contemporary perspectives on digital colonialism, data colonialism, platform imperialism, and artificial intelligence. Rather than treating these concepts as separate analytical frameworks, the study demonstrates that they constitute interconnected dimensions of a broader digital power structure that explains why global communication simultaneously produces integration and fragmentation. This integrated framework extends the relevance of postcolonial theory beyond questions of territorial domination toward the analysis of digital infrastructures, platform governance, and algorithmic systems. Practically, the findings highlight the importance of promoting more inclusive and equitable models of global digital governance. Policymakers, international organizations, technology companies, and civil society should strengthen digital sovereignty, data justice, algorithmic transparency, and inclusive AI governance to reduce technological dependence and ensure broader participation in global knowledge production. Such efforts are essential for addressing persistent inequalities within the contemporary communication order.

This study is limited by its reliance on secondary literature and conceptual analysis. Future research should complement these findings through empirical investigations of digital

colonialism, platform governance, and AI adoption across different regions, particularly in the Global South. Comparative studies examining how countries negotiate the tensions between global integration, digital sovereignty, and technological dependency would further enrich understanding of the evolving global communication landscape. Ultimately, contemporary global communication should be understood not merely as a technological transformation but as an ongoing political, economic, and epistemic struggle over power, representation, and governance. A postcolonial perspective therefore remains indispensable for explaining how digital communication continues to reshape global inequalities while simultaneously creating opportunities for more inclusive, democratic, and pluralistic forms of global connectivity.

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