

Globalisation and the Trend of Global Village: What Is In It For Africa

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Abstract: Globalization as the process of intensification of economic, political, social and cultural relations across international boundaries aimed at the transcendental homogenization of political and socio-economic theory across the globe, impacts significantly on African states through systematic restructuring of interactive phases among its nations, by breaking down barriers in the areas of culture, commerce, communication and several other fields of endeavor. These processes have impelled series of cumulative and conjectural crisis in the international division of labour and global distribution of economic and political power; thereby qualifying basic African feature to be poverty, diseases, squalor, and unemployment among other crisis of under development. This paper was aimed to examine both the negative and the positive impacts of globalization on African states, and suggest some recommendations among which are to improve democratization process, make the task of poverty eradication more indigenous, etc.

Keyword: Globalization, Impacts, Africa, Development.

Date of Submission: 01-12-2018

Date of acceptance: 17-12-2018

I. Introduction

The most prominent narrative of the events of 1990s was the resurgence of nationalism with unpredictable consequences on the world's political landscape. In the post-9/11 world era, focus has shifted to religious fundamentalism and global terrorism as manifestations of dogmatic ideology of nationalism. This means nationalism is not only a force to be reckoned with, but it has now been subsumed under a more general heading of identity politics (Sabanadze, 2013). It can now be argued that identity politics is at the core of the prevailing major post-Cold War conflicts evidenced by the arguably dramatic proliferation of intrastate violence alongside the decline in interstate hostilities. Nationalism, therefore, falls into the category of the forces that are challenging the stability of the post-Cold War international system, and mounting backlash against the normative and material influences of globalization. The purpose of this paper is to provide a detailed exposition of the above narrative on the basis of existing literature on the topic and bring out the challenges of African countries caught in the quagmire of the two concepts.

The paper seeks to elaborate the nexus of globalization and nationalism and what is in it for Africa.

Conception Elucidation

a. Globalisation.

Fundamentally, there is no acceptable definition of globalisation, because the concept is not only multidimensional, but also value loaded. It encompasses nearly every facet of human endeavour—cultural, economic, environmental, political, social. It has been employed to rationalise the development of the advanced Northern countries of North America, Southeast Asia and Western Europe and the underdevelopment of Southern countries of Africa, Asia and Latin and South America. The concept of globalisation therefore, like most other topical issues in the North–South dialogue, It is highly debatable (Omotola, 2010).

For underdeveloped countries, globalisation means nothing more than a re-colonisation process of Third World economies, viewed as a new phase of capitalist expansion concerning accumulation, exploitation, inequality and polarisation. It is therefore seen as a manifestation of the thesis of “imperialism without a major colonial empire” (Osterhammel, 1977). While, to the developed world, globalisation lies at the heart of efforts to redress imbalances in the world system. Situated within such a liberal perspective, it is considered the driving force behind the transformation of the global economy, whose implications for development would be positive, particularly for the Third World. Thus, Globalization is therefore a major factor in the dependence of countries of the South on the North for economic development.

Scholars like Obadan, (2003) view globalization as “the growing interdependence of the world's people ... it is about increasing inter-connectedness and inter-dependence among the world's regions, nations, governments, business, institutions, communities, families and individuals... it fosters the advancement of

‘global mentality’ and conjures the picture of a borderless world through the use of information technology to create partnerships to foster greater financial and economic integration”. According to this definition, irrespective of conflicting perspectives on globalisation, particularly between the North and South, a globalised world would emphasise three inter-related issues—integration, interdependence and partnership through international finance, investment and trade, information technology and technological advancement. If managed properly, it harbours the possibility of a symbiotic pattern of relations between developed and developing countries. However, when it is perverted, it becomes an admixture of a blessing and a curse, a weapon in the hands of the strong for the exploitation and oppression of the weak. The import for this analysis is that globalisation could be a tool for both development and underdevelopment, depending on the extent to which the central concepts of integration, interdependence and partnership are respected.

From the foregoing, getting an accurate definition for globalization is a challenge because it means different things to different people. However, for the purposes of this work, it is essential to find a definition that will be broad enough to encompass all different aspects of globalization while at the same time be limited enough to maintain operational value and conceptual clarity. It is common to describe globalization in terms of wide-ranging and often mutually exclusive tendencies. To this end, Mary Kaldor (1996) argued that globalization is a “complex, contradictory process that actually involves globalization and localization, integration and fragmentation, homogenization and differentiation.” To her, globalization has placed on nation the need to align their internal socio, political and economic way of life to suit the globalisation onslaught. This has brought in new concept like glocalisation, a term that means the diffusion of the content of globalisation to suit the locality. In the same vein, Anthony McGrew (1992) considers globalization as a contingent and dialectical process embracing contradictory dynamics. His definition can be aligned to that of Anthony Giddens (1990), who defined globalization as a dialectical process, “because it consists of mutually opposed tendencies.” globalization splits the world’s population into the globalized rich, who overcome space and never have enough time, and the localized poor, who are chained to the spot and can only ‘kill’ time.” This means as the process is enriching the rich countries of the West i.e. the capitalist core, the same process is impoverishing the poor third world countries with the resultant effect of a diluted culture, religion and tradition.

Globalization can also be understood in three main ways: as a process, as a condition, and as a discourse. According to Anthony Giddens (1992), globalization is a process of “the intensification of worldwide relations which links the distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa” Similarly Held and McGrew (2000) define globalization as a process of expansion, acceleration, and intensification of interregional flows and patterns of social interaction. Nonetheless, such an extension and intensification of social relations also implies increasing penetration of transnational actors into state boundaries. Ulrich Beck (2000) in his writing also noted that, globalization as a process also denotes those processes “through which sovereign national states are crisscrossed and undermined by transnational actors with varying prospects of power, orientations, identities and networks.” In sum, two main features characterize globalization as a process, one is the increasing permeation of “national space” by transnational actors with diverse powers and influences and the other is intensification of social activities and interactions beyond national boundaries.

In essence globalization as a condition can be seen in the spread of international organizations and institutions as well as in the presence of multinational companies, global NGOs and other non-national structures in national territories. According to Martin Shaw (2000) there is a condition of globalism which differs from the globalization as a process in so far as it represents something already achieved and existing. Globalism to Eckman (2017) represents not just certain trends within the modern world, but a new condition or age in which the latter is brought into question.” Similarly, Richard Langhorne (2001:4) describes globalization as the latest stage in ongoing transformations and accumulation of technological advances that have enabled people “to conduct their affairs across the world without reference to nationality, government authority, time of days or physical environment”. It is possible to experience globalism through, among other things, travel, communication, the rise of internet and electronic banking and market, multilateralism, adoption of global strategies, and ways of doing business.

Meanwhile, Manfred Steger (2002) argued that globalization has developed into the so-called “strong discourse” or “hegemonic discourse” which “shapes the world accordingly. Also, globalization can be seen as an ideology serving a specific political project, i.e. to further entrench capitalist ideology. This was postulated by David Harvey (2000) who suggested that the emergence of globalization was neither accidental nor free of political underpinnings. Subsequently, he questioned the rationale of putting globalization on the agenda and argues that globalization has been promoted to displace much more politically charged concepts such as imperialism and neo-colonialism in order to make us “the weak opponents to its politics.” Robert Cox (1997) argued that globalization became an ideology which presents the world with no alternatives. Globalization in this sense appears as finality, as an inevitable and desirable culmination of the powerful market tendencies at work. For leftwing critics, globalization is a hegemonic discourse serving right-wing governments and promoting the interests of the transnational elite. While for the right-wing critics it is an ideology of rootless

cosmopolitans threatening to undermine the traditional structures and values of our societies. Globalization, therefore, emerges as a phenomenon that intrudes into the so-called “national space” on a number of occasions and on many different levels. Such an intrusion may pose serious challenges to the fundamental principles of nationalism. Finally, globalization contains tendencies that may provoke nationalism; although it is arguable that by challenging “the national,” globalization has promoted nationalism around the world. For Anthony Smith (1979) it is the amazing livelihood and adaptability of nationalism that explains its persistence. To this end, the success of nationalism over two centuries can partly be attributed to the manner in which nationalists adapt their vision, culture, solidarity and program to diverse situations and interests. It is this flexibility, he argues, “that allowed nationalism continually to re-emerge and spread, at the cost of its ideological rivals from 1789 to date.” However, to others, the causes of contemporary nationalism lie within the processes of globalization. According to Arjun Appadurai (2001), globalisation have eroded the capabilities of many states to monopolize loyalties and intensified fears of cultural and physical survival. In summary the paper agrees with the definition of Giddens that globalization is a process of “the intensification of worldwide relations which links the distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa”

The Impact of Globalization on Africa

In Africa, its position in the international system has been considerably weakened by the fact that it has been losing the race for economic development in general, and human development in particular, to other regions. Poor performances by African countries accounts in part for the political and social instability and rise of authoritarian regimes that have characterized much of postcolonial Africa, further weakening the ability of African countries to deal effectively with globalization. This does not in any way mean that globalization will be discussed on the two sides: positive and negative impacts.

The negative impacts of globalization on Africa

1. Tendon (1998) states that the cold war which was born out of the process for globalization has had significant consequences for Africa. During its height in the 1960's and 1970's, the cold war witnessed the emergence of authoritarian regimes in the form of one-party or military regimes. This was largely a result of the support of the two blocks to keep African countries in their respective camps. This has in turn, substantially reduced Africa's international negotiating power and its ability to maneuver in the international system. In sum then, the cold war and its demise has worked against democracy and economic development in Africa.
2. Specific impact of globalization on Africa were identified according to Oyejide (1998) in the political sphere, the most important consequence is the erosion of sovereignty, especially on economic and financial matters, as a result of the imposition of models, strategies and policies of development on African countries by the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the World Trade Organization.
3. More important is the fact that globalization for most part does not facilitate the establishment of the economic conditions necessary for genuine democracy and good governance to take solid roots and thrive.
4. Economically, globalization has, on the whole, reinforced the economic marginalization of African economies and their dependence on a few primary goods for which demand and prices are externally determined. This has, in turn accentuated poverty and economic inequality as well as the ability of the vast number of Africans to participate meaningfully in the social and political life of their countries.
5. As a result of the cultural domination from outside that goes with globalization, African countries are rapidly losing their cultural identity and therefore their ability to interact with other cultures on an equal and autonomous basis, borrowing from other cultures only those aspects that meet its requirements and needs.
6. The scientific and technological forces unleashed by globalization have facilitated the extinction of the indigenous development of technology and distorting patterns of production in Africa.
7. Globalization on the whole impacts negatively on the development and consolidation of democratic governance. One form of this is the reduction of the capacity of governments to determine and control events in their countries, and thus their accountability and responsiveness to their people, given the fact that the context, institutions and processes by which these decisions are taken are far from democratic.
8. Globalization introduces anti-developmentalism by declaring the state irrelevant or marginal to the developmental effort. Development strategies and policies that focus on stabilization and privatization, rather than growth, development and poverty eradication, are pushed by external donors, leading to greater poverty and inequality and undermining the ability of the people to participate effectively in the political and social processes in their countries. Welfare and other programs intended to meet the basic needs of the majority of the population are transferred from governments to non-governmental organizations that begin to replace governments making them to lose the little authority and legitimacy they have.
9. By imposing economic specialization based on the needs and interests of external forces and transforming the economies of African countries into series of enslaved economies linked to the outside but with very little linkages among them, Democracy, with its emphasis on tolerance and compromise, can hardly thrive in such an

environment (Rodrik 1994).

10. Further, Mule (2000) views that the economic specialization imposed on African countries makes rapid and sustainable growth and development impossible, conflicts over the distribution of the limited gains realized from globalization becomes more acute and politicized. Vulnerable groups, such as women, the youth, and rural inhabitants, fare very badly in this contest and are discriminated against. This further erodes the national ethos of solidarity and reciprocity that are essential to successful democracies.

11. Globalization, by insisting on African countries opening their economies to foreign goods and entrepreneurs, limits the ability of African governments to take proactive and conscious measures to facilitate the emergence of an indigenous entrepreneurial class. (Mowlana 1998).

12. Globalization has encouraged illicit trade in drugs, prostitution, pornography, human smuggling, dumping of dangerous waste and depletion of the environment by unscrupulous entrepreneurs.

13. Globalization has freed labour across boundaries and facilitated brain drain. It facilitated “brain drain” in developing countries, thus reducing further their human capacity.

Positive impact of globalization on Africa

1. Globalization has eased international trade and commerce, facilitated foreign investment and the flow of capital while calling for greater accountability and responsiveness of leaders to their people, globalization has often pressed African leaders to adopt policies and measures that are diametrically opposed to the feelings and sentiments of vast majority of their people.

2. By defining basic and generally accepted principles of democratic governance, such as good governance, transparency and accountability, in narrow terms, conditioned by particular historical, political, social, and cultural factors, while leaving little or no room for adapting them to different societies and cultures.

3. There are international lobby and pressure groups in various fields. There are universities and institutions of higher learning with all their power to impact knowledge, skills and attitudes that shift behaviours of societies and state leadership as well as followership. All these combine to reinforce the phenomenon of globalization and force the state to shift its behaviour and the way it relates with both its “subjects” and its internal and external partners.

4. Globalization opens people’s lives to other cultures and all their creativity and to the flow of ideas and values.

5. Information and communication technologies have eased interaction among countries and peoples.

6. It is creating a global village out of a wide and diverse world.

7. One major positive impact of globalization on Africa is that it has made available information on how other countries are governed and the freedoms and rights their people enjoy.

8. It has also opened African countries to intense external scrutiny and exercised pressure for greater transparency, openness and accountability in Africa.

Possible strategies of controlling the negative effects of globalization on Africa Having studied the merits and demerits of globalization it becomes obvious that strong African countries are in a better position to fend off these negative consequences and may even see their democracies, economy and military strengthened. Below are the strategies that when adapted will bring the expected merits.

I. The overstretched capacity to regulate and protect the environment: The capacity of most African States to handle issues such as production of harmful chemicals, global warming, depletion of natural resources destruction of organic agriculture, dumping of nuclear waste is still limited. However, as global actors invest and expand their activities, especially related to industrial, agricultural, mining, forest exploitation and fishing, the regulatory capacity of public administration in African countries, which is already limited in many respects is becoming overstretched. The state is getting caught in the middle of its need to speed development through industrialization, agricultural modernization, exploitation of natural resources, etc. and the pressure of local and global environmentalist groups. Global forces in this respect, rather than putting too much pressure on governments to do what is beyond their capacity, should first and foremost concentrate on strengthening the capacity of these governments in relevant aspects.

II. Improve and not undermining the power of the African State: Most African governments are finding themselves in a situation of “fait accompli” when it comes to making certain policies and decisions. International agencies such as the World Bank, IMF, United Nations, World Trade Organizations, etc. take decisions which are binding on African countries. This could be looked at as eroding the sovereignty and power of the State. We must add that this is not only the case in Africa. The poorer the country, the more chance of power erosion in the state. This would be minimized if the voice of Africa’s states was increased and strengthened in the world bodies. Stronger African regional bodies would also help in this respect, provided these bodies were represented in the world bodies at the same time.

III. Improve the democratization process: There is an ongoing democratization struggle in Africa. Some African countries began the process of democratizing their governments, political systems and societies sometime back. However, the international partners they are working with in this globalized world are hardly democratic. While

the democratization process would require that the people of the country in question get involved in the taking of decisions and policies that concern them, some of the big decisions affecting Africa today are more or less imposed by the globalization players such as the World Bank, IMF, the World Trade Organisation, etc. this has been the case for example with the liberalization and privatization policies in Africa. This makes the people to distrust the democratization rhetoric they hear from their leaders when they are confronted with this “fait accompli”. There is a discrepancy on the way the same bodies arrive at decisions of great consequences. It is not possible to be seen to as democratic by the people you govern when they do not see or get involved in the process of making the decision and policies used to govern them. This is a big dilemma for African leaders.

IV. Improve the overstretched capacity to handle international and computer-based crime: The African State and its forces of law and order were used to handle “traditional crimes”. However, with globalization there has been an increase in crimes (drugs, pornography, international corruption etc.) that had been at lower magnitude. In addition, progress in information technology has facilitated the emergence and growth of computer-based crimes, especially fraud. For this the law enforcement agencies have not been well prepared. The increase in these crimes across borders makes the force of law and order look helpless, unhelpful and incapable.

This tends to erode the confidence of the public in the state, thus weakening further its legitimacy. The strong challenge posed by the powerful criminals on the state creates an atmosphere of uncertainty and insecurity in the public, thus reducing the required confidence that would attract both local and foreign investment. There is need to strengthen the capacity of the forces of law and order, especially in the areas of detecting and handling sophisticated crime. If this does not happen, the sophisticated criminals will find ready-made comfortable hiding places in Africa. This will be a big security problem for the rest of the world.

V. Making the task of poverty eradication more indigenous: As global actors pressurize African governments to open up more and more to maximize foreign investments and capital inflows, and as big multinationals and local enterprises utilize this environment to cater for their interests, the government is having less and less room to pay attention to the abject poverty amongst the poor and rich both in and between countries. The African State will have to be encouraged to pay more attention to the fate of its poor populace than to the fate of big global actors. The big global actors can talk for themselves with little problem. The issue is: who will talk for the problem.

II. Conclusion / Recommendations

African countries themselves and those that hope to assist them must first and foremost recognize this fact and commit resources and energies to harnessing the capacity of the African poor for their development. It is hoped that the global actors will realize that it is not beneficial to them or to anyone else to play globalization-game without the poor. For globalization to ultimately be beneficial to everyone-the rich and the poor-all must have certain levels of capacity that permit them to effectively participate in the game.

The current world, where resources and benefits are concentrated in the hands of very few, is not a comfortable world for anybody. And to sustain it is to breed future insecurity as the mass of the poor strives to get a share of the riches concentrated in the hands of the few. It is clear that globalization benefits those who have the capacity to harness it but can be very detrimental to those whom it finds not prepared. Most African States are not prepared, especially in terms of having the requisite capacity.

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Grace Oluseyi Oshinfowokan Ph.D. "Globalisation and the Trend of Global Village: What Is In It For Africa.. "International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention (IJHSSI), vol. 07, no. 12, 2018, pp.01-06