

Globalisation as Universalization: Rethinking the Philosophy of Globalisation in Africa

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Abstract: This paper asserts that Globalization is not a new phenomenon in the world. There are however different interpretations as to the philosophy behind the process of globalization. This has negatively affected the thinking, effects and participation in the globalization process in Africa. This paper identifies five major interpretations in the process of globalization as: internalization, liberalization, westernization, supraterritorialization and universalization. It argues that a better conceptualization of the philosophy behind globalization which encompasses all other forms of interpretation is universalization. This, as the paper shall show, is a synthesis of culture, ideas, objects and views that call for mutual respect and gains. This philosophical rethink will not only give a better understanding of the process and phenomenon of globalization but as the paper contends may lead to a fundamental rethink of global politics, economy, culture, ideas, feminism and ecology as well as the meaning and purpose of life. An attempt in this direction will on the whole better enhance Africa's understanding and participation in the globalization process.

Key words: Globalization • Universalization • Rethink • Africa • Philosophy

INTRODUCTION

Waters opines that although the word “global” is over 400 years old, the common usage of such words as globalization, globalize and globalizing did not begin until about 1960 but the concept came into academic circle around 1980's [1]. There is no doubt that the whole world is becoming increasingly aware of the effect of the “other's action” in the world. Globalization has become a buzz word occurring in the vocabulary of every aspect of life today such as in commerce, culture, politics, governance, academia, media and entertainment. As such, in defining Globalization, some scholars have explained it by its various disciplines while others have given it a purely economic interpretation.

Rather than discuss globalization by its various disciplines it can also be discussed as a philosophy, a process and a phenomena, the three p's of globalization, as Khan puts it [2]. Before we move further, let us attempt some definitions and explanations of globalization.

Defining Globalization: Globalization is not an easy task to define. Ajayi in discussing globalization said that it has been an elusive and contentious enterprise. He defines globalization as the process leading to the growing interdependence of nation –states across political, economic and social spheres [3]. This interrelationship is characterized by massive daily commercial transactions, the homogenization of culture worldwide concurrently with the resurgence of emphasize on ethnic and communal identity, some erosion of the political clout of many states and finally, the increasing reliance on communication technology to perform more tasks [4].

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Scholte gave five broad classifications of globalization as internalization, liberalization, westernization, or modernization, deterritorialization or supraterritorialization and universalization. It is along this line that we shall start to examine and understand the phenomenon of globalization [5].

Globalization as Internationalization: Globalization here is defined as internationalization, that is, an enlarged and growing flows or movement of trade, capital investment, people, messages, information and ideas between countries. It is thus a growth of international exchange and interdependence [6]. This definition of globalization is mainly economic in nature. Material exchanges are involved and information is needed to be able to adhere to high economic exchange and interests in terms of labour, capital, raw materials and so on.

Globalization as Liberalization: Globalization as liberalization refers to the process of removing or reducing government - imposed restrictions on movement of goods, services, capital and people between countries in order to create an 'open', 'borderless' world economy [7]. This is in order to facilitate international economic integration. Here liberalization serves as a vehicle for the success of globalization as internalization. For there to be success in movement of trade, capital investment and so on there is a need for removal of restrictions on trade, barriers, foreign-exchange, capital and visas. This need is political in nature. We can then say that globalization as liberalization is an extension of globalization as internalization in that political wills and ideas are used to extend territories in order to enhance free flow of trade, ideas, people, messages, information and capital investment between countries.

Globalization as Deterritorialization: Globalization can also be defined as a social process in which the constraints of geography on social and cultural arrangement recede and in which people become increasingly aware that they are receding [8]. Scholars argue that deterritorialization has proceeded mainly and rapidly from the West. The developments within the European Union are widely quoted as example of deterritorialization [9]. Waters also claims that the deterritorialization of social and especially of political arrangements has proceeded most rapidly in the West especially with the example of global deterritorialisation of European Union States [10]. This is the geographical aspect of globalization in that globalization is a form of deterritorialization or the growth of supraterritorial relations between people. The far-reaching change in the nature of social space is emphasized here. The proliferation and spread of supraterritorial or what we can alternatively term 'transworld' or 'transborder' – connection brings an end to what could be called 'territorialism', that is, a situation where social geography is entirely territorial. Although, territory still matters in the globalizing world, it no longer constitutes the whole of geography. By and large, globalization in this respect refers to a reconfiguration of geography, so that social space is no longer wholly mapped in terms of territorial places, territorial distances and territorial borders [11].

Globalization as Westernization: The idea of globalization as Westernization has gained much ground especially amongst scholars in the developing world. Proponents of this idea are of the view that globalization is a Western idea and it is a propagation of Western culture, thus, it is essentially Eurocentric. In this regard globalization is seen as colonization and imperialism. Waters states that Globalization is the direct consequence of the expansion of European culture across the planet via settlement, colonization and cultural mimesis [12].

This idea is also bound up with the capitalist development through political and cultural arenas. However, Waters proceeded by saying that it does not imply that every corner of the planet must become Westernized and capitalist but rather that every set of social arrangements must establish its position in relation to the capitalist West [13]. In other words every nation must make reference to Western and capitalist possibilities.

Globalization is seen as been Europeanized in the sense that even when we think we are globalizing we are more or less Europeanizing. Scholte contends that Globalization introduces a single world culture centred on consumerism, mass media, American and the English language. There is a homogenization of culture which breeds either progressive cosmopolitanism or oppressive imperialism depending on the side in which one is [14].

Globalization as Universalization: Lastly, the phenomenon of globalization can be defined as universalization. Here, it refers mainly to a planetary synthesis of cultures, a process of the worldwide spread of culture, ideas, objects and experiences [15]. This is the idea of globalization that this paper suggests as the philosophy for globalization. The synthesis of cultures, ideas, objects and experiences should be world –wide and really global. In this regard we can talk of globalization of ideas, economics, politics, decolonization and policies that will develop humanity. This does not rule out cultural identity as a world phenomenon in that it is a philosophy which expects the global world to be structured along respect for others, their cultures, ideas, goals and de-emphasizes of competition for the sake of it: That is, a universalization of ideas that will lead to heterogenization of cultures and not homogenization.

From all the analysis so far, we can say that the various distinctions made about globalization are not mutually exclusive but they overlap. Though, their respective focus appear different, in that, while one emphasizes the economic, the other emphasizes political and another geographical, yet, what each position assumes is not wrong. In fact, it can be argued that all of them, put together, better describe the phenomenon of globalization as Universalization.

Globalization needs to be seen as a process that unifies the world in a process of spreading various objects, be it economic, political and cultural experiences to all people in all the nooks and crannies of the globe such that it benefits humanity, this then becomes the essence of globalization as Universalization. In this respect, rather than bred homogenization, globalization will breed heterogenization in which everybody, every culture will have one thing or the other to contribute in terms of meaning, identity, culture, politics and economy.

Some Agenda for Effective Globalisation: There are some agenda initiated for the success of the process of globalization. This includes The World Bank Group with a mission to fight poverty and improve the living standards of people in the developing world. It is to provide low-interest loans, interest-free credit, grants, policy advice, technical assistance and knowledge sharing services to low and middle-income countries to reduce poverty.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) is also an institution in the globalization agenda. It is a sister institution to the World Bank in the United Nations. It shares the same international membership and the same goal of raising living standards in its member countries. It works to foster global monetary cooperation, secure financial stability, facilitate international trade, promote high employment and sustainable economic growth and reduce poverty.

The World Social Forum (WSF), a third institution is an amalgamation of many political and social movements from around the world. It is working to demonstrate that the path to sustainable development, social and economic justice as in alternative models for people-centred and self-reliant progress, rather than in neo-liberal globalization. Finally, The World Trade Organization (WTO) is a global international organization dealing with the rules of trade between nations. With all these agenda in place, one will expect a perfect system in the process of globalization.

However, it is possible to argue that these agenda when deeply evaluated are ways of perpetuating evils of globalization. That the initiators of the agenda are not sincere and that the various aspects of the agenda have ulterior motives. Be that as it may, we can say that whether the agenda is good or bad, sincere or not, depends on people's point of view. However, the agenda as spelt out stands for what should be the right step to take in achieving the best out of the process of globalization.

Reactions to Globalisation: There are various reactions to the process and phenomena of globalization; we shall look at these reactions especially from African scholars' perspective since our focus in this paper is to rethink the philosophy of globalization on the African perspective. Scholte identifies three different groups reacting against globalization, the conservatives, the liberals and critics [16]. The conservatives deny such a trend as globalization they tend to defuse globalization by playing down the extent of the shift or even encourage a rollback of the process.

These groups include reactionaries such as nationalists, religious revivalists who would want the process of globalization reversed. They consider Globalization as utopian and that any critical perspectives of it should be ignored. This dismissal of globalization has been very prominent among academics holding the realist international theory.

They contend that the world system is and by implication always reducible to interstate competition for power. Power politics for them as at today is resilient as ever and the main contemporary debate about change concerns whether, in the post-Cold War World, this timeless struggle unfolds in a unipolar or multipolar context. From this perspective, globalization is a delusion; one that might detract dangerously from prudent management of the anarchical international society [17].

This position by the conservatives definitely blocks new knowledge of the world and it cannot be allowed to block new knowledge. Globalisation is real, in that, events around the world shows that we cannot continue to ignore each other. So, to think that globalization is an illusion is to be under an illusion.

The second group are the liberals. Unlike the conservatives they celebrate the presumed dividend of globalization. They acknowledge the reality of globalization. They confidently and dogmatically promote globalization as a means whereby for example capitalism, rationalism will lead to universal prosperity, peace and freedom. The liberalist so far has upper hand in that they admit the advantages of globalization. They acknowledge globalization as real but uncritically progressive and benign. They equate internalization with globalization and hope that globalization will help realize the promise of modernity accruable from traditionalism, colonization and communalism, thus, globalization will benefit all humanity. This position to a large extent portrays good ideas about globalization but to assume that globalization is solely of advantages, promises and benefits will be to assume too much. As we shall see latter there are costs, implications and negative effects of globalization as well.

The third group labelled as the critical orientation, emphasized the importance and the dangers of the recent accelerated expansion of a supraterritorial whole world dimensions of social relations and they decry its alleged disempowering effect. Critics argue that the rise of supraterritoriality could well involve an extension and reinvigoration of new forms of imperialism, xenophobia, patriarchy, racism, militarism, authoritarianism, fundamentalism, nihilism and other recurrent predicaments of modernity. So, there is a need for vigilance and not a total dismissal or liberal outlook. Critics do not take globalization for granted; they call for an evaluation of the process of globalization.

Of the three reactions, the position of the critics appears more tenable in that it is not on any extreme. The advantage of this position over the others is that while not denying or accepting globalization in its entirety, it leaves room for a critical evaluation of its phenomenon, process and philosophy. This is a welcome reaction that can help globalization in all its "3 P's" to be evaluated for growth.

Globalisation to the Africans: Most African states see globalization as a process of colonization, marginalization, westernization, privatization, imperialism; a process of world capitalism and an imposition of the Western culture on developing nations. In fact, globalization as Westernization best describes the African reaction.

Jean Kachaiga states that the paradigm of globalization has affected many like none before. This is because it has been able to bring together the actions of many actors toward one definable scene where all have the same stake but different priorities and tools to influence the outcome. The stake for it is the welfare of humanity. The priorities are, for states, their respective national welfare, for companies, the maximization of profit, for non-profit sector and the specific causes they advocate. As for the tools, states have the coercive power; companies have the finances and investment capacity [18].

Since government and their respective economic actors usually with mutual interest are historically characterized by different economic profiles, the global market synergy accommodates better those states and economic actors with competitive capacity and relates a pool of successful and less successful states. As such less successful states like the third world and developing nations with already minimal trade impact will grow insignificant in the global market. The lack of competitive success of developing countries, therefore, constitutes a factor of marginalization in the context of globalization whereas globalization is supposed to imply inclusion in one global market but has resolved in a paradox of the success of a few states and the marginalization of the many [19].

Dada opines that Globalisation is not a neutral term or social phenomenon because it has been seized by world political and economic super-powers for ideological reasons to establish their hegemony and control over other world cultures and economies [20]. Ukpere strongly argues that the African continent seems to have been marginalised and left behind by globalisation. Capitalist globalisation undeniably, created wealth but also intensified inequality and poverty in Africa. Indeed, there is a positive functional relationship between globalisation, inequality and poverty in Africa [21]. The Nigerian Philosophical Association Conference in 2007 gives us an insight into the level of reactions of African scholars on globalization. Let us look at a few of them.

William, in discussing the problems that globalization have caused for Africa asserts that Globalization essentially has a Eurocentric bias and basis. In other words, it is the celebration of European values and ideas of development that are often found to be antithetical to Africa's needs [22]. He says further that globalization has only created awareness of our existence in an interdependent world and of our dependence on some others but, in a major sense of our domination by others [23].

Odia also sees globalization as a Western concept in which the Africa need to tread softly before involving itself. He argues that since Africa, as a continent, is poorer than the West and since globalization is a Western concept, there is the need to tread gently in the process of globalization. We need to know why the West is championing globalization, how it is being processed, what we stand to gain or lose and the values it propagates [24]. So, we can say that for Odia, we do not seem to have a choice but join the race of globalisation. But since we do not understand the underlying motive of the West in globalisation, there is a need for a caution.

Igbafen perceives the phenomenon of globalization as signifying a holocaust for African countries. The validity of this claim to him is reinforced by the reality that globalization has, in little time, witnessed the intensification of inequality, marginalization, poverty, disease, insecurity, huge debt burden, unemployment, social anarchy, political instability, cultural alienation of unimaginable proportions, while the threat of complete annihilation of the African personality has become more real than before[25]. He concludes his paper by saying that the paper uses the deplorable existential condition of African life to support the condemnation and rejection of the "globalize village" and concludes that Africa is neither here nor there in this idealistic globalized world where relevance or position is defined by the harmonious combination of power, economy, science and technology [26]. The place of Africa to Igbafen in the global economic order is that of a subservient economy. Africa occupies the position of a dependent economy whose objective is to serve European interests [27].

From the foregoing we can say that these scholars are negative critics of the process, the philosophy and process of globalisation. To further establish this position, let us look at some of the reactions of another scholar and critic of globalisation.

Aborisode conceptualizes the philosophy behind globalisation as privatization. He defines globalization as a process of shifting control of national economies from nation-states to the private sector on an international scale [28]. The consequences of globalization as privatization thus have far reaching negative effects on African states. This policy of privatization of public enterprises facilitates the movement of capital and technology in a 'borderless world'. With particular reference to Nigeria, he highlights a myriad of problems that globalisation as privatization has caused and can cause the African states.

Firstly, implementation of privatization policy has intensified the fear that it is possible for private owners to close down in a particular country and shift production to countries with lower wages or countries where labour has been relatively subdued. This and mere threats of it may be used to keep working conditions under permanent pressure while still making enormous profits especially with the phenomena of e-commerce. Thus there is employment insecurity.

Secondly, privatization has attracted foreign investors into Nigeria while sending her best brains, into self-exile. Thus, there is increased migration, brain drain and so on. Thirdly is the deterioration of occupational disease and injury. Profits are accumulated at the expense of deprivations of the people, subjugation of nations and slaughter of working people. Furthermore he describes globalization as a neo-liberal agenda which has inflicted unprecedented attacks on workers' right, particularly in terms of intensified exploitation and reduction of the social wage.

Globalization as privatization has also led to increase in working hours. It has also increased social and income inequality. Globalization as Aborisade further argues has worsened the position of women. They are not only compelled to work, but their role in the household is used to sentence them to a low-paid and insecure job [29].

Globalization has also strengthened commodification which reduces everything to a product to be sold and bought. Everywhere, all aspect of life is commodified and it has brought about the slogan “No pain, no gain”. Finally, globalization undermines democracy and as privatization it has been accompanied with the denial of rights of workers to form unions [30].

As a way forward Aborisade advocates an elimination of chaos and antagonism among individual capital owners, nations, international and regional economic groupings while production is organized to meet the needs of the whole world populations, rather than for the great few for profit [31]. In other words, the state and not private sector must be seen as the engine of economic growth.

In as much as one may be led to agree with Aborisade on the problems that globalisation has caused and the proposed solutions, it can also be argued that Africa’s problems are not globalization problems *per se*. Globalization though may have heightened the problems Africa is facing but it is not the major primary cause. The various problems attending to Africa are caused by two major factors which can be classified as endogenous and exogenous, internal or external or what can also be identified as the push and pull factors. Push factors which are internal and endogenous stimulates migration from Africa. This includes low pay, employment, underemployment and exposure to endemic violence, non-provision of basic facilities for research, academics and for citizens in general, persecution, poor political climate and oppression. On the part of investors the electricity problem constitutes a major reason why they cannot operate conveniently in Africa.

The pull factors such as unstable political, economic and social climate, possibility of earning high income outside the country, freedom from oppression, persecution, violence, availability of basic amenities such as light and water that can make life bearable, basic infrastructures and so on then creates a fertile ground for the prospects of globalisation. So we can argue that globalisation has only heightened the problems of Africa, it is not a major cause of it. Rather than reject globalisation on this ground why not Africa address the push factors and rethink the philosophy of globalisation.

Rethinking Globalisation in Africa: It cannot be argued on face value that globalisation is inherently bad or good. Scholte for example, states that globalisation has among other things helped to increase ecological consciousness and programmes to enhance environmental sustainability. Global communications on certain occasions have encouraged worldwide humanitarian concerns [32]. However, as Vaughan argues, the parameters of globalisation success will have to be defined and for the moment it can be described as an exciting development and a frustrating event depending on the side of the fence on which you are [33]. On the side of developing nations and Africa to be precise, there is no gainsaying that globalisation will be construed as a frustrating event. After all, what do we contribute in the face of low technology, bad political climate and low communication output? In short, for globalisation to be successful, its philosophy has to be examined, defined and redefined.

With the complex nature of problem and paradox of globalization grows awareness that there is a global force that unites the world as a global village. We cannot continue to sit down and pretend that the world is not a global village. Countries are coming up with common currencies, cross-boundaries issues that affect one nation now has become a common one that cannot be neglected, for example, the swine flu issue. Environmental and women issues are becoming global resources of justice. So there is a need to accept that globalisation has come to stay thus a need to rethink in Africa.

If properly conceptualized, globalisation should ensure or engineer a spirit of help for developing nations and others who are less privileged. It will stir up the spirit of concern for global poverty knowing very well that there is no how we can ignore what is going on in other parts of the world. Thus, there is a need to look out for societal and ethical values which identifies nations as role players in the world global order. It is important to understand what the philosophy behind globalisation should be because an adequate understanding of the philosophy will enable the African world re-think globalisation.

Oyeshile arguing all this line states that rather than view globalisation as an imperialistic enterprise championed by the Western nations to perpetuate their exploitative tendencies on the underdeveloped nations there is some salutary underpinnings within globalisation that can enhance growth and social order especially in the third world countries [34]. However, we cannot realise this underpinnings without a rethink.

The question then is how do we rethink? This paper suggests that there is a new definition of the philosophy of globalization as Universalization. By this we mean a form of heterogenization. Whether we like it or not globalization even amidst the academic or intellectual differences has affected and is still affecting lives of billions of people. However, a rethink will spark up a new Universalization that looks at the positive impact of globalization. Besides on the universal plane spur up the advanced nations to look at the factors and themes that advocates the essence of respect for the cultures and identities of other nations.

On the part of advanced nations there is the need to know that the views of all human beings and ideas matter for the positive development of mankind. The interconnected nature of man cannot be glossed over thus respect for each other's ideas must be cultivated and propagated. A nation cannot afford to live as an island nor can it pretend to be able to solve world problems without the need of the wisdom and contribution of others.

The experience of other cultures towards globalization is worthy of note. Taiwan has recently revitalized and reinvented many local cultures and traditional lifestyle elements to create a local identity that can be globalized [35]. The Japanese example is also crucial to our point. They have been able to show globalization as the fusion of different cultures - give and take blend two things while respecting others culture or ideas. In Japan, globalization has not resulted in homogenization but has developed in a dynamic fashion, giving rise to signification diversity and multi-polarity.

Tulasi Srinivas writing on the Indian case of cultural globalisation said that cultural globalisation is a two way process for the Indians. Firstly it is non-Western, primarily Indian, contributions to the process of cultural globalisation and secondly that as cultural globalisation forces do enter India, cultural models are also increasingly emitted from India. For example new age practices such as meditation yoga, spiritual healing, massage and Tantrism are popular in the West today. In terms of food culture such foods as *masala dosa* and chicken curry are gaining ground in the world today. In fact Indian artefacts are consumed all over the world [36].

Countries outside the West that are not strong economically and technologically but strong culturally have things to contribute to global culture. So if economy and technology improves then Africa can make an impact on the globe. While striving for economic and technological advancement Africa can start with what is at hand. For example, the communitarian ideals in our culture are worth globalizing. The spirit that de-emphasizes individualism and emphasizes the love for one's neighbour and unnecessary competition will help to resolve some of the problems of the competitive nature of globalisation. Africa should hasten up and address in a more serious way the question of leadership, democracy and human rights as these are issues that can hasten development. They are issues that affect humanity positively or negatively irrespective of Westernization or not.

The question of identity is also crucial to the contribution of a global culture. Africa should be proud of its cultural heritage although there is need to modernize in order to address our future needs in the direction we deem fit. In this way whatever choice Africans make will be out of self-conscious, rational choice and not as a matter of superimposition of any culture on the African culture.

Success on the African culture be it economic, political, depends on African themselves We need to take responsibility of our future, re-examine ourselves and stop lamenting over our past predicament. Rather than lamenting we should brace up and re- direct for future development. In this wise we will have something to contribute to the globe.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we can say that globalisation calls for a universalism that envelope the whole world. A way of thinking that concerns not only the "I" but the WE", one that is not self centered but encompassing, that thinks of the common -good, the effect of one's action on all. This philosophy will help to see what is good in globalisation, the benefits

and advantages of contributing to globalisation. There is no doubt that this will help globalisation however what is the essence of converging when there is nothing to contribute, when the relationship is not symbiotic, when the relationship is one of master servant or the inferior and the superior. The modification to the philosophy of globalisation is that it should have a contributory role, that is, symbiotic in nature a role that calls for heterogenization of cultures, mutual respect and gains. This is the sense in which Africa can be called upon to rethink globalisation.

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