

Globalisation as Instrument of Neoimperialism in Africa

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Abstract: Globalisation is a complex process which targets the political economy of states and also seeks to liberalise the key domains of human activity. The phenomenon of globalism finds expression in all key domains of human activities. This paper is expected to critically examine how globalisation affect neoimperialism in Africa and/or how does it impact positively on the less developed States in Africa? To this end answers to these questions will form the main thrust of the paper: Is there any relationship between the push for globalisation and democratic pluralism and liberalisation?, How can we explain the assertion that globalism is an advancement of imperialism? Does globalisation hold any prospect of development for African economies? As long as no country of the 21st century can survive, let alone develop under the policy of isolationism as did the United States before 1914, the full involvement and participation of all states in the globalization process is inevitable. The ability of African States to minimize risks and maximize the benefits of globalisation should be a pursuit in the decades ahead. The level of democratic transparency is necessary in order to survive the torrential wave of globalism. This paper will adopt the Marxian Theory and content analysis of data that will be generated.

Key words: Globalisation • Neomperialism • Pluralism • Liberalism and Marxism

INTRODUCTION

Since the 1980s, the world economy has become increasingly connected and integrated with evidently decreasing transportation costs and the diffusion of Information and Communication Technologies which has brought about a fast downgrading of the concept of distance, while gross trade, Foreign Direct investment (FDI), capital flows and technology transfers have risen significantly. In most countries, this current wave of globalisation has been accompanied by increasing concern about its impact on development [1]. Globalisation has in the post-Cold War era become the latest buzzword used by many although understood by only a few.

In the most general sense, globalisation applies to the interdependence of economies and nations; a phenomenon that bring about the rapid liberation of emerging economies. Hence, the whole process of globalization is about development and transformation of hitherto poor and closed economies into modem-open market economies-Based on the foregoing, it can be argued that the African economy cannot afford to be

dormant since a nation with a closed economy with few relations with the rest of the world is no longer desirable [2]. However, African countries being peripheral economies are always at the receiving end of the vagaries of globalisation. Moreover as emerging economies, the pace or process of globalisation is not dictated by them but rather by the West to the latter¹'s utmost interest. Africa as one of the underdeveloped or undeveloped spheres of the world needs to tap into the globalisation process which holds the prospect of development for the continent.

While the current condition shows that globalisation has had more of a deleterious effect than a positive one on the continent, it is largely adduced that adopting and applying practical measures that will reduce or possibly eliminate the adverse consequences of globalisation would go a long way to enable Africa maximize the enormous benefits from its involvement in the globalisation process. As [2] has instructively noted:

It is suggested that countries and region of the world that are unable to integrate themselves into the global economy might no benefit from the growth enhancing

features of globalisation. The picture of African development makes it difficult for African countries to be strongly integrated into the global economy ...Fifty (50) (sic) African countries are being marginalized due to their poor economic performance and low level of development (mainly exporters of commodities).

It is against this backdrop therefore that the paper centers on exploring the concept of globalisation and establishing its connection with development vis-a-vis the place of Africa in the whole dynamics of the globalisation-development discourse. Political and Economic development and growth are always offered by the neo-liberal apologists of globalisation as the inherent benefits of this all-important trend. While, it can be said that these promises of globalisation has to a great extent been actualized in some parts of the world, especially in East Asia, the same cannot be said of Africa. The result of globalisation is the dangerous division between and among people and countries benefiting from the system and those that are mere recipients/reactionaries of the effects. As it were globalisation brings about distortion in the political economy of States and regions either positively or negatively despite the openness in the system. Democratising relations with unequal yoke among participants in world politics and economic relations creates two worlds. The owners of globalising forces, such as technology, structural stability Institutions, capital and inventions, while others are the recipients of the negative influence and fallouts of the process.

Thus, the question: why has globalisation not liberated African economies? Does globalisation hold any prospect of development for African economies? What are the challenges of globalisation as an instrument of development in Africa? Providing answers to these questions are germane to fulfilling the central concerns of this paper.

Conceptual Discourse/Theory: The concept of globalisation is one of the highly contested among social scientists, journalists, writers and commentators of all sorts. [3] gave a very insightful definition of globalisation when he submitted that it "entails the increasing international integration of markets for goods, services and capital bringing about noticeable changes to the face of the world economy which has frequently been described as gravitating towards a global village." He

further argued that "these changes are observable in the magnitude and structure of trade in goods and services, capital movements, gains in productivity and efficiency that are driving growth and creating jobs in industrial countries and opening the door to export led industrialisation in middle income countries."

However, for [4] globalisation means "the widening, deepening and speeding up of world-wide interconnectedness in all aspects of contemporary social life, from the cultural to the criminal, the financial to the Spiritual." By implication therefore, it touches all aspects of human life. Also, according to the Third World Economic Trends and Analysis (cited, in [2]) globalisation refers to a process of increasing economic openness, growing economic interdependence and deepening economic integration between countries of the world. It is associated not only with a phenomenal spread and volumes of cross-border economic transactions, but also with an organisation of economic activities which straddles national boundaries. It therefore the concept explains the increasing integration of economies particularly through trade and financial flows around the world. Thus, [5] noted that globalisation simply refers to the process of the intensification of economic, political, social and cultural relations across international boundaries.

The concept of globalisation also explains the emergence of "a borderless world" characterized by the breakdown of boundaries as barriers to economic exploitation to increase access to the markets of the developed and developing countries [6] also conceived globalisation in line with the idea of the emergence of a global village and opined that it can be seen as an evolution which is systematically restructuring interactive phases among nations by breaking down barriers in the areas of culture, commerce, communication and several other fields of endeavor. In a similar vein, [2] noted that globalisation describes the increase of trade and investment due to the falling of barriers and the interdependence countries.

Such de-territorial inaction leads to the free movement of people, labour, knowledge and technology across international borders, pointing to cultural, political and environmental dimensions of globalisation.

Overall, while some perceive globalisation as a process of increasing integration into the world economy as positive (salvation), others see it as negative (damnation) in terms of unequal pattern of development

[2]. Therefore, globalisation whether as a stepping stone or stumbling block for economic development remains a subject of controversy. This debate is clearly between the skeptics of globalisation and the so called transformation lists. For the former, globalisation is essentially a myth which conceals the reality of an international economy designed in favour of certain regional trading blocs, specifically Europe, Asia-Pacific and North America, in which some powerful national governments regulate international economic activities.

The Theory: The socialist theorist, Karl Marx in 1948 formulated what we commonly refer to as Marxist theory that best offers explanation to the dynamic impact of globalisation on nations. The political explanation of the sense of territorial compression of the world system monopolised by the capitalist production, distribution and exchange was the inevitable drive for the bourgeoisie to “nestle everywhere, settle everywhere...intercourse in every direction, universal interdependence of nations” [7]. It is important to underscore the fact that globalisation was necessitated by the drive for internationalisation of monopoly capital and expansion of industrial capitalism which constituted the most basic source of technologies. Marx explains that the capitalist bourgeoisie are the agents of the globalisation process to enable them gain dominance politically, economically and socially everywhere in the world.

The Marxist theory which anchors mainly on the production relation between owners of capital and owners of labour best defines the relationship between the developed nations and under developed states of Africa. The outcome of globalisation has created an unequal worlds of the haves and the have-nots. This represents the industrialised nations that appropriate the benefits of globalisation while the underdeveloped states remain the losers. The surplus values accruing from global openness and democratisation benefits mainly the owners of forces of globalisation which are invariably the industrialized capitalist states.

In the light of the above, the forces of globalisation depend on the regulating power of the core nations who ensure continuous integration of the peripheral nations as suppliers of labour (workers) into the capitalistic international economy. For the transformation lists on the other hand, globalisation is a central driving force behind the rapid social, political and economic changes that are reshaping modern societies and world order. Therefore,

contemporary patterns of globalisation are historically unprecedented phenomena that the governments(states) and societies across the globe have to adjust to whereby there is no longer a clear distinction between international and domestic, external and internal affairs [2]. In line with this as [2] has claimed the process of globalisation is playing a more and more crucial role in the determination of the efforts of trade and other external economic relations and national development strategies.

Development: Development is a multi-faceted and multi-dimensional concept that has been used severally to describe the process of economic, social and political transformation. It connotes an increase, expansion, improvement or change for the better in a particular direction, technology, social, economic and political aspect of life resulting in happy human life. It is essentially a process of change in relation to the social, economic, political and cultural spheres of societal life which is purposefully directed towards making life better for all citizens of a social and political community.

Because of the emphasis on change, development has often been perceived synonymous with growth especially in the economic state of a country to the extent which increase in labour productivity and in total output, with technological progress and industrialisation is achieved. More so, the emphasis is not exclusively on economic growth through increase in labour productivity or capital accumulation but also on the condition in which people in a country have adequate food and job and the income inequality among them is greatly reduced. In other words, emphasis is placed "on the service of the well-being of people by concentrating certain indices of standards of living such as poverty, income distribution, life expectancy, infant mortality, nutrition, literacy, education and access to social services and amenities". In the final analysis development boils down to the process of economic and social advancement which enables people to realize their potential, build self-confidence and lead lives of dignity and fulfillment; it is aimed at freeing people from the evils of want, ignorance, social injustice economic exploitation [8].

Based on the foregoing, development is related closely to the concept of globalisation and addresses the process of transforming a society positively. Also, development is essentially used in an exclusive economic sense; this is basically because economy is in itself an index of other social features. To this end,

therefore all societies have experienced development at some points but the level of development differs from continent to continent and under different conditions. It is therefore pertinent to view globalisation and development as the two broad concepts for transformation [8].

Globalisation and Africa's Development: Most scholars view globalisation as having the capacity for increased opportunities for growth and development. [2], opined that globalisation has opened up new and extensive opportunities for worldwide development. However, this is not progressing evenly" as some countries are becoming integrated into the global economy more rapidly than others with the evidence of fast growth and reduced poverty. The unification and re-shaping of the world into a global village through the neo-liberal path with improved political and economic relations that will engender growth and development has been the goal driving the globalisation process. This incidentally informed the outward - oriented policies of much of the East Asia in the past four decades which brought about greater prosperity to the region, transforming it from one of the poorest regions of the world to a politically and economically progressive one.

On the contrary, Africa in 1970s and 1980s pursued inward oriented policies which incidentally resulted into economic stagnation or deteriorating socio-economic conditions. In the face of corrupt leadership and harsh externalities, Africa was left with nothing but to grapple with poverty and soaring inflation. As development is highly defined in economic terms, meaning that economic development involves proper and adequate utilization of a nation's resources in order to efficiently increase the productivity for the betterment of the people, with the use of application of modern technology and science, which involves mass education, reasonable political order, efficient management of human and material resources etc. The African region was nowhere to be found in this dynamic Society.

Most skeptics view globalisation as connected to the wider debate about modernity and capitalism whereby the process of globalisation is simply understood as function of global diffusion of Western values (Westernisation) and a continuous moving away from the command economy particularly within the context of the collapse of centrally planned economies towards market economy, hence experiencing a worldwide spread of

capitalism. The idea of westernization and capitalism automatically translates to mean that globalisation will be unfavorable to the continent and perhaps unworkable in the pan-African context. It is within this contradiction that any attempt to examine the prospect and challenges of globalisation in Africa must be constructed. [9], instructively argued that:

Africa 's growth performance since gaining independence from colonial rule in the 1960s has been quite disappointing ... Africa was, at least in the first decade of independence, growing faster than other developing regions in the world. However, the late 1970s dramatically set back the continent and led to stagnation and regression through the 1980s and 1990s. Africa's role in the global economy is largely responsible for this, expressed most visibly in insufficient resource mobilization and capital formation and the continent's lopsided trade relations.

Against this backdrop, [9] argued that Africa lacks the economic credentials required for stimulating meaningful economic competition of a globalised economy. Many nations and regions that have succeeded in the globalisation race had attained a certain level of industrialisation such that the scientific and technological skills of the people are highly mobilized and directed to provide the necessary panacea to solving local problems and effectively exporting the excesses. Hence, it would perhaps be unfavorable and disadvantageous to introduce African economies to a new and challenging economic relation of the globalised world system since it has not matured to compete with the Western industrialised world. Thus, it is argued that developing (African) economies (society) cannot adequately take advantage of a globalising world economy unless certain and prior conditions are fulfilled, i.e. an educated citizenry with the requisite skills, a framework of physical infrastructure such as energy, water, transport and communications; a network of export based industrial production [10].

In other words, Anya holds the view that Africa is not at present in a position to take full advantage of the benefits of globalisation because the necessary conditions for tapping into the operations of the global economy do not presently exist. Although, situation persists particularly in Africa that the interaction between

globalisation and development is a highly complex issue, the evolution of the global market economy has the effect of integrating an increasing number of developing countries. Nevertheless, at the same time, it also excludes or marginalizes particularly developing nations that lack the minimum prerequisite for development. [11], concluded that globalisation has brought about economic and political integration in the world which put African countries in subordinate and victimized positions. This is because globalisation as an integrating social reality 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.

Challenges of Globalisation in Africa

Colonial Origin and Fragile Nature of African States:

Like other developing nations of the world were colonized by the imperial developed nations of the West. The colonial powers divided the colonial territories among themselves and created sovereign States with weak cultural, economic and political base with sheer disregard for indigenous boundaries and/or tribal loyalties. Incidentally, the independent States which emerged from artificial creation were made up of people of mixed tribes and races with no common culture, history or origin. The cold war further weakened Africa's capacity to develop or acquire the needed infrastructure to take full advantage of globalisation. 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 dictatorships. 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 demise has worked against democracy and economic development in Africa [12].

Dependent and Consumerist Nature of African Economies:

Historically, the African state is a colonial creation which main characteristics and structure of their economies is the outright dependence on the metropolitan powers as it were during colonial rule. African economies in the post-colonial era are heavily dependent on the economies of the industrialized countries. [2] described the nature of African economies as increasingly geared to the export production of a very limited range of commodities and the importation of a wide range of consumer goods. In other words, the African economy is

characteristically a consuming and not a manufacturing one. Through the course of colonialism, African economy was designed to produce and supply raw materials for the world market and to consume and demand for imported consumer goods. In addition, the economy of most African countries is mainly mono-cultural, especially dependent on crude oil, as its performance of Agricultural growth is generally very weak. [13] noted that "most third world countries are still economically dependent on Northern countries, their Trans National Corporation (TNCs) and institutions. Each form of dependence is associated with specific mechanisms whereby the Southern countries have substantial funds and economics resources transferred abroad. The South-to-North out flow of resources far outweighs the North-to-South 'aid' (a large part of which consist of loans that have to be repaid anyway). The world economic situation and globalisation have been described as inequitable and inimical to African and the Third world countries in general. According to [5], various processes of globalisation were "unequal and against the interest of developing countries in almost every respect".

Debt Crises among the Weak African Economies:

Africa has been described as the most heavily indebted region in the world. The debt crises coupled with the failed attempts at implementing the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) brought stark poverty to the various countries, The World Bank in 1987 classified 30 African nations as low-income countries with per capita income of less than \$500. Thirty two (32) of them were declared ineligible to use International Monetary Fund (IMF) facilities because of their heavy overdue financial obligation, while three (3) were totally declared among the most heavily indebted nations in the world [2]. The situation was no better in the 1990s until the Jubilee 2000 initiative that offered debt forgiveness for most of the heavily indebted countries.

Indeed, globalisation and other post-cold War concepts are the over-riding process in the world today with the evidence of uneven global development where significant growth in a relatively few continues and marginalisation of many poorer (African) countries. Again the aim, the uneven or unequal level to winner-takes-all situations thus widening the gap between those able to reap the gains of globalisation and those who are left behind [2]. [12] also observed that the most important consequence of globalisation 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 Organisation. On the whole, globalization has reinforced the economic marginalisation 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.

Cultural imperialism and anti-developmentalism of globalisation: As a result of the cultural domination from outside that goes with globalisation, 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. More so, the scientific and technological forces unleashed by globalisation have facilitated the extinction of the indigenous development of technology and distorting patterns of production in Africa. Globalisation 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 organisations that begin to replace governments making them to lose the little authority and legitimacy they have.

Therefore, by imposing economic specialization based on the needs and interests of external forces and transform 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. Globalisation, 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. Globalisation has encouraged illicit trade in drugs,

prostitution, pornography, human smuggling, dumping of dangerous waste and depletion of the environment by unscrupulous entrepreneurs. Globalisation has freed labour across boundaries and facilitated brain drain. It facilitated "brain drain" in developing countries, thus reducing further their human capacity.

Assessing the Prospects of Globalisation for Africa's Development:

Historically, Africa entered the globalisation process in the nineteenth century following the scramble for and partitioning of Africa and the attendant rapacious exploitation of the continent under colonialism. Globalisation as championed by the America hegemony was interrupted by the cold war era, however with the effective end of the latter in 1990, the historical relationship between Africa and the West continued to flourish with the continuous integration of African into the global economy. However, globalisation has largely been driven by the interests and needs of the developed (western) world [7]. Hence, the UN report [2], states that increasing globalisation of the world economy is a threat to its poorer (African) countries. In other words, the poorer countries are in danger of further falling behind more development competitors in an increasingly globalised economy. [14] argued that globalisation is definitively the spread of capitalism and expanding this argument [15] emphasized that as a result of the capitalistic nature of globalisation, it has been of disastrous consequences to the governments and people of the African continent.

As further buttressed by the United Nations Secretary General, Kofi Annan's Millennium report "globalisation is an extraordinary powerful force offering both unique opportunities and challenges for nations and people. He however believes that, globalisation will lead to faster economic growth, higher standards of living, accelerated innovation and diffusion of technology and management skills. He again, noted that, globalisation has "begun to generate a backlash "because the benefits resulting from it remain highly concentrated among a relatively small number of countries and are spread unevenly within them". He in conclusion expressed the fear that globalisation might have eluded African State (cited in [2]).

Indeed, there are many implications that can be drawn from Africa's involvement in the globalisation process. First, as the primary objective of the major players (industrialised Western economies) is to open up the

national economic space in developing countries by removing their barriers so that the big corporation of the North could have greater and better markets access in the South. It is however, important to note that if developing African countries were to open up their economies (exporters, raw materials and lower-technology manufactured products) to all and sundry, the big corporation in the developed countries will overwhelm the small companies in Africa. Moreover, investment agreements sought by the North are such that would prevent government of the South from regulating the entry and operation of foreign companies, thus allowing them total freedom to operate in all sectors in developing countries. In such a situation the local industries are suffocated to death as they cannot cope with the pressure and vigour of the competition that arises.

In addition, the price of the exports or raw-materials (commodity price) are often fixed by the manufacturing big corporations of the developed countries and the prices at which the higher-technology manufactured products are sold to the developing (African) countries are incidentally determined by the manufacturing developed countries. The prices and power at which they sell and buy are practically the major concern of the developed countries of which the African countries have no direct control. Under this condition, the huge and big companies for instance will in the long-run push aside the little companies of the developing countries as has happened in the telecommunications sector, power sector and construction sectors in most African countries. In the final analysis, the implications or efforts of economic globalisation would be the demise of the African countries while the developed countries will take over everything. Eventually however, globalisation would leave the developing countries totally exposed and unable to protect themselves [2].

However, despite the inequality and poverty that characterize the emergence of globalisation, Africa cannot afford to ignore the globalization process. As argued by the former UN secretary, Dr. Boutros-Ghali, African countries should rather prepare the continent for the emerging trend if the continent is to remain relevant in the international system. He said further that, "Globalisation is an irreversible process and it does benefit first of all the industrialised countries. The reason is because the economic activity at the global level lies in the hands of a very small" cited in [2]. As long as no country of the world in the 21st century can survive, let alone develop under a policy of isolationism as did the US before 1914, the full involvement and participation of all states in the

globalisation process is highly imperative. The probing question remains, how can Africa minimize the risk and maximize the benefits of globalisation?

First, as argued by [2], African countries should strive to develop the potentials for active and effective participation in the world economic order, through encouraging economic integration process in the region. African governments must provide a clear direction in this regard through the sincere initiation of a new approach which involve more coherently thought-out principles to guide African development process and to provide a framework for more efficient resources mobilization that will move the present nature of economic condition of African states from Primary/Consuming economies to a more matured industrial/manufacturing economies. More so, creating a conducive investment environment must be given priority African governments as such will open opportunities for employment and reduce poverty. Economic stability, institutional building and structural reform etc are very important apparatus for long-term financial and technical assistance to finance major investment in physical and social infrastructure in Africa, which are crucial to attracting private investments. It is important to note that political instability arising from recurrent conflicts across the continent immensely robbed Africa of the needed infrastructure for its development. Therefore, globalisation holds enormous potential for Africa's development as far as political stability can be achieved in the continent.

Secondly, for globalisation process to take root and be beneficial to any country domestic reforms must be initiated to ensure namely, virile Banking system that lubricates the economic process through effective financial inter mediation; high premium on enthronement of knowledge, performance and merits; liberal system, openness and democratic practices, virile private sector, motivated by moderate profits; vigilant citizenry that keeps the government on its toes and a growing economy. Interestingly, some African countries like Nigeria and South Africa have done well in putting in place these structures which speaks of their ready to embrace fully the globalisation trend. The just concluded 2015 general elections in Nigeria which was adjudged peaceful and credible both locally and by the international community is a pointer to the fact that Nigeria has attained an appreciable level of democratic maturity and good governance, which is essential in ensuring that the rule of law and transparency prevails as they are necessary conditions for development in a globalising world.

CONCLUSION

Globalisation 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, globalisation 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; 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. All these point to the fact that despite the negative consequences of globalisation on the African economy, it holds immense prospects for the continent.

Globalisation opens people's lives to other cultures and all their creativity and to the flow of ideas and values. Information and communication technologies have eased interaction among countries and peoples. It is creating a global village out of a wide and diverse world. One major positive impact of globalisation on Africa is that it has made available information on how other countries are governed and the freedoms and rights their people enjoy. It has also opened African countries to intense external scrutiny and exercised pressure for greater transparency, openness and accountability in Africa. [3], cited [1] rightly noted "*trade is good for growth, growth is good for the poor and so trade is good for the poor*". Therefore it would be apt to conclude that growth - as offered by globalisation — is good for the poor African economies while arguing that persistent poverty in LDCs is mainly due to their low level of trade integration.

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