

Globalisation and The Politics Of Economic And Social Development In Africa

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Abstract

Globalisation, though seen as the catalyst for social and economic development across the globe, its over bearing influence on national economies particularly in Africa and the rest of other developing economies has led to compromising national sovereignty, institutions of governance, moral rectitude and the plunging of the entire global community into sharp divide between the North and the South with the North having superior advantage over the south as a result of its technological strength. In this paper, the authors identified globalisation as a phenomenon used by advanced democracies to hold on to the control of international economies at the expense of developing world through its strong institutions: political, economic, social and cultural. Data for this study was gathered through primary and secondary sources. Primary sources were through structured oral interview and focus group discussion while secondary sources were from documented sources. Data was qualitatively analysed from 30 respondents drawn from 3 Departments in the University of Calabar – Departments of Political Science, Economics and Social Science Education. The major finding of the study revealed that globalisation has great positive and negative impact on social and economic development in Africa.

Keywords: Africa, Development, Economy, Globalisation, Politics, Technology.

Introduction

The world has become a global village is a fact that cannot be controverted. Trade, commerce, industry, science, technology and politics freely play across the globe. Man can traverse and defy distance, language, culture, geography, altitude, climate and weather to interact with fellow man in diverse areas including but not limited to the above-mentioned facets of human interaction.

This is the direct corollary and indeed factual manifestation of a factor, concept, process and activity referred to as globalisation. It is the most sung concept in global political and economic arenas. Globalisation reduces the world to a small geographical entity, and makes it easy for people from one end of the world to interact with their counterparts in another with little or no encumbrance. By this medium, developing nations of Africa, South America and Asia could reach, and be reached by people from developed economies of North America and Europe as well as Australia. By this form of interaction, development is passed from one part to another. Conversely, its purported integrative effort has been able to shed light to the North-South divide of the globe. This point is a corroboration to Lee and, who asserted that [1]:

Since the '80s, the world economy has become increasingly "connected" and "integrated"; on the one hand the decreasing

transportation costs and the diffusion of Information and Communication Technologies have implied a fast downgrading of the concept of "distance", while – on the other hand – gross trade, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), capital flows and technology transfers have risen significantly.

According to Enu and Odey and Enu and Odey, as much popularity accompanies globalisation, so much is the controversy surrounding it [2]. The more ovations it receives from pundits, so do criticisms greet its mention. While globalisation has been hailed as an acceptable global phenomenon that brings the world to a village square with its attendant benefits, little attention has been paid to the proportion of the benefits being shared by parties involved. Whereas the developed West has been reaping bountifully from the relationship, the politics of global development agenda has not really benefited Africa as a continent and as a people as much as must have been portrayed in Western literature. This assertion is confirmed by Lee and Vivarelli, who noted thus [1]:

In most countries, the current wave of "globalization" has been accompanied by increasing concern about its impact in terms of employment and income distribution. Whatever definitions and indicators are chosen, the current debate is characterized by an acrimonious dispute between advocates and critics of globalization. While this is true even as regards the employment and in-

come distribution effects within the developed world, positions diverge even more sharply over the impact on developing countries (DCs) (p.1).

The divergent positions alluded to in the above quote include, inter alia, the emphasis laid on the fact that globalisation has been of disastrous consequences to the governments and people of the African continent; the spread of capitalism; “the broadening and deepening linkages of national economies into a worldwide market for goods and services, especially capital” [3-5]. Institutional advancement of the North region of the world gives them an overt advantage over the South especially Africa sub region. They dictate the tune and tone of economic development across the world. Africa and the rest are at the receiving end of global economic policies orchestrated either directly by developed nations or in proxy by international organisations, which they alone control. Notable examples in this regards are the World Bank and IMF, leadership and control of which are the exclusive reserve of America and European Union respectively. Globalization seeks to remove all international barriers to the free movement of international capital and this process is accelerated and facilitated by the supersonic transformation in information technology. Science and technology are virtually controlled by these same nations that are already advanced in it. Africa has therefore become the dumping ground for Western wastes. Globalisation is therefore driven largely by the needs of the western world while the needs of the developing economies remain of little or no consequence.

In this research, the authors examined the concept of globalisation with special focus on its role in the development of international political economy viz a viz, the place of African continent in relation to the western world. Since globalisation has been viewed as a catalyst for economic development, how has this conception transformed the African economy? Whereas emphasis was placed on globalisation as the primal concept in this discourse, the paper would not be comprehensive without a look at the concepts of politics and development as well as the trinitarian relationship of the trio. When politics viewed as the driver of international relation, the question is to what extent has it helped Africa navigate and sustain itself in the global scheme of things? The idea of development that is propagated as the gains of globalisation, the question is how much of development has Africa attracted to itself? What is the link between globalisation, politics and development? These and other questions are the kernels this paper seeks to crack.

Understanding Globalisation

Globalisation, though cannot be described as amorphous, is highly controversial. Some scholars have defined it in many ways. What is of import is that there is a point of convergence. Beginning from the 1990s, globalization has become a particularly fashionable way to analyse changes in the international economy and in world politics. Advances in technology and modern communications are said to have unleashed new contacts and intercourse among peoples, social movements, transnational corporations, and governments. The result is a set of processes which have affected national and international politics in an extraordinary way [6].

In its origin, scholars noted that globalisation began in a small way in the 19th century. To Toyo, globalisation started during the period that witnessed the movement of capital from Europe to open up new areas in America and Australia, mostly in the building of rail road systems and agricultural plantations that were central to the expansion of capitalism. This means the author is equating globalisation with capitalism [7]. A critical examination of that notion would reveal that the spread of capitalism (as well as colonialism and neo-colonialism) marked the beginning and spread of globalisation. The author went further to state that; “The subsequent maturation of joint-stock companies and developments in the areas of banking, industrial capital and technology, aided among other things, the scramble for and partitioning of Africa and, its then attendant rapacious exploitation of these parts of the world.” (p.56). That was how globalisation took its root in Africa.

However, according to Simpson and Weiner (1989) in Nsibambi, the term globalisation was first used in 1959 in *The Economist* to refer to quotas of car imports. This inaugural usage was followed in 1962 by a prescient article in *The Spectator*, which referred to globalization as “a staggering concept [8].”

The bedrock of concept of globalisation is the following definition: a process of advancement and increase in interaction among the world’s countries and peoples facilitated by progressive technological changes in locomotion, communication, political and military power, knowledge and skills, as well as interfacing of cultural and value systems and practices. Globalisation is not a value-free, innocent, self-determining process. It is an international socio-politico-economic and cultural permeation process facilitated by policies of governments, private corporations, international agencies and civil society organizations. This is summarised as: the increasing interdependence of the world [8].

Perspectives of Globalisation

Globalisation cuts across many diverse spheres of man’s existence the world over. It exists in many forms and ramifications. It traverses all disciplinary barriers. However, its core area of domicile, and use, are international politics and economics. In the words of Majekodunmi and Adejuwon, as an interdisciplinary term, globalisation sits squarely at the interface between politics and the economy [5]. Its dominant form has come to be known by many names: corporate globalization, economic globalization, financial globalization, mature capitalism, neo-imperialism, neo-colonialism, or globalization from above. One perspective attempts to define it as a process of reinforcement and extension of the international flux of commerce, capitals, technology and labour force. Another perspective refers to institutional changes, which are brought about in the society by the increase of these flows and the development of the transnational corporations [9]. In this point of view, it stressed the weakening of the regulating function of the nation-states. In its stronger version, globalisation implies the disappearance of the state in its economic dimensions while a subtler version considers globalisation just as the loss of an important portion of the economic sovereignty. Yet another perspective refers to the growing homogenization of certain processes and behaviours like the introduction of glob-

al standards in the production of goods. However, the most extended idea in this perspective is the existence of a convergence in the demands of goods and services, a homogenization in the regulation of the capital goods and technology [9]. On the other hand, Mishra held that the term globalization summarizes a variety of processes that together increase the scale, speed, and effectiveness of social interactions across political, economic, cultural, and geographic borders [10].

Politics

Politics has been severally defined by different authorities. The most commonly used definition of politics as observed by Emine include: “the art of the possible” (Lord Bismarck); “the study of the state and its organs” (Laski, Plato, Aristotle); “a political process” (Arthur Bentley); “allocation of resources” (Laswell, Dudley); “struggle for power” (Dahl, Morgenthau); “authoritative allocation of values for society” (Easton); and “power and choice” (Shively) [11]. According to Harold Laswell, the study of politics is the study of influence and the influential. To him, the science of politics states conditions; the philosophy of politics justifies preferences. The influential are those who get the most of what there is to get (values). Available values may be classified as deference, income and safety. This means that the game of politics – local or global, individual or national – is played to achieve the aforementioned values. Politics could therefore be seen as the activity through which people make, preserve and amend the general rules under which they live [12]. Politics could also be said to encapsulate all activities involved in the acquisition, consolidation and utilisation of decision-making power in a given entity.

Development

Development, in the context of this work, is in Economics parlance. But development in general terms is all about improvement, betterment and general increase in quality and quantity. But in the international studies parlance, development encompasses the need and the means by which to provide better lives for people in poor countries. It includes not only economic growth, although that is crucial, but also human development—providing for health, nutrition, education, and a clean environment. Development means to make something better than it was; to improve. Note that development does not mean growth.

Economic development, which is the concern of this paper, is the process by which a nation improves the economic, political, and social well-being of its people. The term has been used frequently by economists, politicians, and others in the 20th and 21st centuries. The concept, however, has been in existence in the West for centuries. It has also been associated with such terms as Modernization, Westernization, and especially Industrialization.

Methodology

This study adopted the qualitative research approach as data analysis was based on the opinions of scholars in the disciplines of Social Science Education (Faculty of Education) and Political Science and Economics (Faculty of Social Sciences) of the University of Calabar, Nigeria. The major instrument for data collection was a structured oral interview. The population for the study was all scholars in the fields of social sciences/ social science education across Africa, University of Calabar (UNICAL)

was used as the case study. The sample for the study is made up of 20 scholars from the University of Calabar. A total of 15 academic members of the afore-mentioned Faculties constituted a discussion panel that responded to the research questions. The panel was moderated by the lead author. The panel comprised of both females and males with ranks ranging from Senior lecturer to Professor. The remaining 5 members of the sample frame were interviewed individually by the second author. Panel discussion and interview were in line with the stated research purpose and questions. Information gotten from the respondents were qualitatively analysed, and discussed in line with existing literature. Other data was gathered from secondary data (internet, books, journals and lectures).

Results And Discussion

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How has politics driven African continent towards self-sustenance within the context of global politics?
2. What level of development has globalisation attracted to Africa as a continent?
3. What is the link between globalisation, politics and development?

Research Question 1:

Africa in the global arena: the place of politics

In the interview session, group discussants unanimously agreed that the contributions of politics in globalising Africa cannot be overemphasised. To the discussants, international politics played a significant role in positioning African continent in the global political map. They however described the process of globalisation as a western means of “perpetuating colonialism” in another form termed “neo-colonialism,” which has adversely jeopardised the sovereignty of African states. Discussants described globalisation as a means of subjecting the African continent and its people to the apron strings or the whims and caprices of the West. They argued that whereas Africa is not politically and economically stabilised to withstand the political antics of the developed world; their relationship is largely lopsided with greater influence coming from the former colonial masters. A case in point is the relationship Francophone African states have with France. In one accord, the respondents submitted that Africa still plays a second fiddle role in the global political arena.

This point of view is corroborated by Odey and Terhile , who noted that by their membership of international organisations, Africans are bounded by treaties and conventions enacted in continents away and grafted on them to obey [13]. These international organisations have quasi-legislative, administrative, supervisory and jurisdictional effects on states within the continent. According to the authors, the freedom of these states to have full control of their internal and external affairs is badly hampered.

To Ibrahim , globalisation negatively impacts on the “development and consolidation of democratic governance.” To the author, this is made possible by 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 [4].

Research Question 2:

Globalisation and Development in Africa

In the panel of discussion, discussants emphasised on the effect of globalisation and development in Africa. They described globalisation as “an instrument per excellence for the economic strangulation of the continent.” Discussants viewed the free market (or trade liberalisation) component of globalisation as an act of opening Africa up for economic domination and as a dumping ground. According to panellists, globalisation has not brought about real economic development to Africa because Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) is nothing comparable to the goods and services African economies spend their foreign exchange on. According to an interviewee, “globalisation is a capitalist approach to keeping the rich richer and the poor, poorer.”

Globalisation is currently characterised by transnational integration of economies as a result of increasing expansion, diversification and deepening of commerce and financial links, technology and information exchange and free movement of people and goods across national borders. This has reduced the entire world markets to a single market place. The implication of this is that only producers sell while consumers like Africans buy, in which case, there is unilateral movement of resources – from Africa to the rest of the world. Due to this state of affairs, international boundaries have been opened for all kinds of trade including illicit ones such as drugs, human trafficking, prostitution and dumping of toxic wastes and depletion of the environment by unscrupulous entrepreneurs. Indeed, globalisation has reinforced economic sabotage and marginalisation of the African continent. In order to attract Foreign Direct Investment into Africa, “many governments have improved their countries’ attractiveness by expanding trade and liberalizing their investment framework” [14].

In its 1999 Human Development Report on the subject of globalisation, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) states that ‘people everywhere are more vulnerable.’ Justifying this claim, Ghatak buttressed that changing labour markets makes people insecure in their jobs and livelihoods. The erosion of the welfare state removes safety nets. And the financial crisis is now a social crisis [15]. All this is happening as globalisation erodes the fiscal base of countries, particularly developing countries, shrinking the public resources and institutions that protect people.

Orubuloye (2005) identified the consequences of globalisation on the African economies to include:

1. Increasing deflationary trend (depression of local currency in relation to western currencies)
2. Recession in production of goods especially in the manufacturing sector.
3. Rising poverty level and unemployment.
4. Rising debt profile of African states.

To this extent therefore, globalisation has done more harm than good to African economies.

Research Question 3:

The Trinitarian relationship between globalisation, politics and development in Africa

Respondents in one accord affirmed the twined relationships

existing among the three concepts: globalisation, politics and development. The world is made of states and nation-states or political entities, which are on their own independent sovereign status and reserve the right to self-determination. A professor of Political Science in the University of Calabar maintained that “each national government is expected to, by its sovereign powers, wield an unlimited, uncompromising, absolute power within its territorial integrity. By this, each national government possesses inalienable rights to determine its development agenda and pace. However, owing to the compelling force inherent in the process of globalisation that has permeated all facets of the human development across the globe, political and economic sovereignty of nations has been compromised.” This is in concordance with Odey and Terhile, who affirmed that [13]:

Globalisation has led to a decline in the power of national governments to direct and influence their economies (especially with regards to macroeconomic management), and to determine their political structures. There is a strong indication that the impact of globalisation is most felt through the extent to which politics everywhere is now essentially market-driven (p.8).

The issue is not necessarily that state machineries – government, ministries and parastatals (MDAs) – are malfeasant or lack the capacity to run the affairs of state, but the constraints of meeting development goals and the people’s aspiration imply that national politics must be played in such a way as to reckon with international market forces since no nation is self-sufficient. Globalisation conceived as the weakening of international boundaries or trade liberalisation, implies that African states would be greatly short-changed in their economic interaction with the developed nations. In order to survive, African states have, on countless times, succumbed to the carrot and stick approach employed by international economic organisations such as the IMF and the World Bank – that have rather impoverished the people through the introduction of obnoxious and excruciating economic policies as preconditions to get a bail out. A case in point is the introduction of Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) in Nigeria in the ‘80s leading to the devaluation of the Naira and a greater liberalisation of foreign trade. The above were preconditions for IMF loan. There is therefore no gainsaying the fact that globalisation is an instrument of capitalism meant to perpetuate capitalist ideology across board. Mishra identified several ways globalisation relates, albeit on the negative side, with different facet of the state’s affairs. But the scope of this research is within the ambit of politics and development in Africa [10].

First..... the loss of economic autonomy of the nation- state. States cannot conduct an effective monetary policy because of international capital flows. A domestic economic move has ramifications over the entire world. Manuel Castells terms this as the “network effect”. The weaker states are the most vulnerable as they cannot pursue autonomous monetary policies and have given up control over this arena. The most extreme example is the “phenomena of dollarization”, with countries adopting a foreign currency and giving up any effort to maintain their own national monetary supply (p.91).

Another social issue is the increased terrorists and secessionists occurrences across the globe. Globalization has strengthened

the hand of resistance movements, leaving no place isolated and augmenting people's power as a political force outside the state institutions. Globalization has even facilitated the terrorist networks to operate easily due to improved communication and technological links worldwide. This argument had been corroborated by Enu and Odey, who maintained that organised crimes in the global society is greatly aided by the process of globalisation [2].

The demise of the welfare state is one other area of concern. Globalisation has death blow on. Globalization has turned the state into a profit-making institution. The famous "retreat of state" is a retreat mainly from the realm of welfare and social entitlement. Globalization is leading the civilization to "greatest happiness but to the smallest number of people". The state has lost its control over the flow of people and ideas within its territory. Globalization has led to greater movement of people across borders. People are migrating to foreign destinations for better education and job prospects. The case of illegal migration of African youths through Libya despite the horrifying travails therein is an example of a desperate situation. Thus the state is losing control over its human resources, particularly its skilled labour force. Western educational, economic and health institutions are filled with myriads of Africa's best brains both as staff and students. There is also substantial loss of sovereignty in public policy formulations. The foreign and domestic capitalist firms lobby the decision-making institutions to take favourable decisions especially in the form of tax reforms, disinvestment, export-import policy, etc.

Furthermore, Mule stated [16]:

The most obvious (of these problems) are the low incomes on the continent (Africa) with the GDP per capita of only US\$315 and with declining service sector contribution rates from around 20% GDP to 15% of GDP. These are accompanied by declining government revenues. The low average per capital income levels are further exacerbated by very high income inequalities comparable to, or even worse than those of Latin America. There is high incidence of social exclusion.... Africa is also marginalized globally with its contribution to world trade amounting to less than two percent ... Africa is also highly aid-dependent with aid accounting for nine percent of GNP on average for all countries.... These are also problems of governance ... on the political and economic management fronts.

Concluding Remarks: The West And The Rest Of Us; Wither Globalisation

Globalisation on its own should not be regarded as a bad phenomenon though seen as a phenomenon aimed at bridging global divides in language, culture, customs, distance, legal tender, communication, religion, social status and political inclination among others deserve to be welcome by all and sundry. Globalisation is such a fundamental factor predetermined to villagising the entire globe; bringing churches, offices, friends, families, markets to one's bedroom comfort; enabling one-on-one contact with partners at one end of the world in a twinkle of the eye; enhance immediate exchange of goods and services; increase one's choices and many more opportunities. It has come to stay, and as a process, its forces are expanding until all nooks and crannies of the world are linked and connected to each other.

Despite all the advantages that accompany globalisation that warrant many scholars to applaud it, this paper has been able to reveal a lacuna in the midst of it all. The problem with globalisation, impetus to this research endeavour, is the benefit of developing countries of Africa from globalisation. Globalisation and international politics and economic development have been glaringly lopsided with a steep slope. The politics of development in the light of globalisation has been dictated by the West. Africa, at the receiving end, dances only to the tune played by the capitalist West. Globalisation favours the West because they have the capacity to play at that level, whereas, feeble economies of Africa can at most watch.

In the final analysis, Africa cannot favourably participate in global affairs until she extricates herself from the current economic, social and political conundrum entangling her. Until then, globalisation would be criticised as a western ploy to subjugate, colonise and imperialise Africa. Nonetheless, if the West don't want to be seen as being, and described, sinister, it would only be wise for them to formulate and implement policies and programmes geared towards economic independence of Africa, a continent that contributed immensely to the growth and development of the New World and Europe.

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