

GLOBALIZATION: ITS SOCIOLOGICAL AND CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines globalization as part of contemporary social thought. The inter-relationships between economy, population change, environment, globalizing democracy and human rights, and social life are some of the complex aspects of globalization analysis. In doing this, the various challenges facing developing countries received much attention. These include: food insecurity, environmental degradation, sustaining human resources development, ensuring effective energy supply and utilization, achieving democratic governance and economic reconstruction, and developing science and technology. Globalization is analysed within the context of sociological and conceptual analysis using dialectic and functionalism of Karl Mark and Pierre Vanden Berghe. The paper argues that if Nigeria were to fit in the new millennium and be a co-participant in international (global) affair, there is an urgent need to pay attention to the challenges posed by globalization as mentioned above. Globalization is conceptualized as the process whereby the world's interdependence is sustained through accelerating spread of awareness of the global interconnectedness of human activities, and the consequent responses which this spread of awareness elicit. This paper has policy implications, therefore the following recommendations are made: Nigeria should embark upon strategic development of human resources; determine the various ways globalization affects her; enhance democratic governance; have a comprehensive programme of activities for foreign firms; pay more attention to human development and team up with other third world countries to argue for the reform of the United Nations and its organs.

INTRODUCTION:

SOCIOLOGY OF GLOBALIZATION:

Sociology as the embodiment of scientific social knowledge, is product of society. It evolved as part of a great transformation which began in the eighteenth century, a transformation characterized by decline of "primordial" physical environment and its replacement by a "purposively constructed" one (Coleman, 1993: 1). While sociology

emerged and developed, this great transformation, was actually rooted in even earlier times, and gathered momentum as the gradual incremental phase of the phenomenon which has become profoundly accelerating during the present century, particularly its second half. This profound phenomenon is what is today termed "globalization", both as a process of "becoming" and a state of "being". Because sociology and globalization are both expressions of the interplay between

man and his environment, both concepts condition each other, at least in terms of our perception and response to each. Our world is an inter-dependent one, at least in the realm of environment. For example, oceans are among earth's key defences against global warming, absorbing up to two billion tons of carbon dioxide a year (Gibson, 1997:36). This interdependence has been affected by human discoveries and activities greatly in the 21st century. For example, September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the world Trade Centre (WTC) in U. S. is causing global economic recession. As (Toffler, 1970: 15-16) rightly observes, " a war in Vietnam alters basic political alignments in Peking, Moscow and Washington, touches off protests in Stockholm, affects financial transactions in Zurich, triggers secret diplomatic moves in Algiers".

The above analysis indexes contemporary globalization and it is an index of a trend accompanied with information technology, new tools which we can use to serve our ancient human needs. It is about this trend that commented on, contending that "time has ceased, space has vanished" (Asuzu, 1987:104).

The consequences of this change is enormous and diverse in our today's world. These are manifested in the emerging "information market place" in which computers and their uses everywhere buy, sell and freely exchange information and "information market", that is, " the activity people and machines perform when they transform information which accounts for 60% of the economy" (Dertouzos, 1997:171).

Beyond the emerging information market place, a major latent consequence of this trend is the emerging need for a collaborative work to answer the questions of global climate change, biodiversity, ecosystem function and resilience" (Bird, 1997: 54).

In this sociological evaluation of globalization, this paper argues that the

increasing interdependence of the world has both local and global implications and challenges for developing countries.

SOURCE AND METHOD OF STUDY:

While many countries, both developed and underdeveloped are instantaneously exposed to valid information on the shrunk realm of economy transactions and markets globally, and the advantages of these, only a few countries (including Nigeria) are fully equipped to exploit the advantages. This is because new emerging countries and economies cannot adapt to the rapid and complex globalization (especially in the areas of information technology, health and education). There is also the problem of ever growing inequality between nations. Again, while information on contemporary threats of human activities to biodiversity are radiated instantaneously around the world, the response is disparate across time and space. This lag sustains the diversity which global interdependence is characterized by.

Globalization has the following interdependent dimensions:

- (1) Global interdependence is considered primordial and accepted as given, at least from ecological perspective.
- (2) It is this interdependence that globalization should seek to sustain.
- (3) The key mechanisms for sustaining global interdependence is through spread of information on how human activities can negatively or positively affect global interdependence.
- (4) Globalization encompasses the consequent human activities, or inactivity, which follows the spread of information on global interdependence. Based on the above, globalization is conceptualized in this paper as the process whereby the world's interdependence is

sustained through accelerating spread of awareness of the global interconnectedness of human activities, and the consequent response which this spread of awareness elicit.

In searching for a theoretical framework, which will serve as a background for this paper, the synthesis of dialectic and functionalism by Pierre Van den Berghe (1963) is the most pertinent. Both are mainstream sociological views of society, which can cover a wide spectrum of the phenomenon under study. Proponents of the dialectic include Hegel, Marx and Dahrendorf the while the functional view is represented by Parsons and Merton.

Synthesizing their two views on society, Berghe (1963) advanced that both approaches are holistic, that is, both look at societies as systems of inter-related parts. Secondly, the concepts of conflict and consensus which, dialectic and functionalism respectively emphasize have dual roles in societies, that is, conflict can contribute to integration as much as consensus can prevent adaptation to change or even precipitate the disintegration of group.

The third point of synthesis is that both dialectic and functionalism share an evolutionary notion of social change. This suggests that a given state of the social system presupposes all previous states. The final point of synthesis is that both views are based on equilibrium model of society. That is, societies or social systems exhibit long-range tendency towards integration.

The above assumptions, within the context of this paper, translate into the following propositions:

- (1) The world is a global system made up of several countries, communities and groups who are relatively autonomous and also inter-dependent with each other.
- (2) At any given point in time, a country, community or group tends to pursue activities which emphasize their autonomy than global interdependence.

- (3) Change is inevitable in the global system. This change would proceed gradually in some parts while rapidly in others.
- (4) However, change is not unilinear, even though ascensional. In whatever aspect, even though ascensional. In whatever aspect, the global system at any given state presupposes all previous states. Sources of change are multiple and so are the consequences on the global system on the one hand and on the constituent parts on the other hand.
- (5) The global system is characterized by long-range tendency towards integration. This happens irrespective of the rapidity and scale of change.

ANALYSIS:

The major issues of contemporary globalization include:

- (1) Economic Globalization
- (2) Population change and global environment
- (3) Democracy and Human Rights
- (4) Social Life
- (5) Information Technology

ECONOMIC GLOBALIZATION:

The free market globalization which typifies economic globalization facilitates the activities of transnational corporations. According to Giddens (1993:543) the 600 largest transnational corporations account for more than one-fifth of the total industrial and agricultural production in the global economy. Virtually all these companies are based in the industrialized countries, 80% of the top 200 based in the United States (Giddens, 1993).

One may argue that sustainable global

inter-dependence is threatened by economic globalization the way it is presently structured. The challenge is to restructure global institutions and activities to help build resource base of constituent parts of the global village. This restructuring is indispensable to fair global exchange and sustainable interdependence.

POPULATION CHANGE AND GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT:

Another issue is the survival of the human population. This survival is indispensably dependent upon the continued function and resilience of the earth's biodiversity, ecosystem and global climate. However, human activities, occasioned by population change, have accelerated the threat to global environment.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY:

On human rights and democracy, it has been noticed that in several countries of the world, ethnic cleansing, genocide, religious wars have hindered the evolution and sustenance of democratic structures. In these countries human rights are flouted and human being, mainly children and women, are dehumanized. Examples are in Ruanda and Burundi, Nigeria etc., global integration has been threatened as universal human rights are violated.

It is gratifying to note that the United Nations, playing an executive, legislative and judicial role in global integration, facilitates global democracy. Apart from the international Court of Justice, the United Nations set up Crimes Tribunal to try all those who threaten global peace.

GLOBALIZATION SOCIAL LIFE:

On globalizing social life, one can argue that if the reality of the world as a global social system is increasingly re-inforced by

globalizing, it stands to reason that the global trend has multiple and complex implications for social living across the world (including Nigeria).

As Giddens (1993:528) argues "our lives ... are increasingly influenced by events happening well away from the social contexts in which we carry on our day to-day activities".

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY:

In the area of information technology, scientific ethos characterises the cultural design of today's world. Information technology (in the areas of computers and the solutions within a relevant scientific and technological praxis was nonexistent". (Anya, 1999:68).

At independence, neo-colonialism replaced imperial colonialism and the Nigerian society for example, began the struggle to heal herself of prevalent structural malaise which colonial experience had created. Agricultural production surged on. But with the discovery of oil, the Nigerian economy became monolithic and corporate existence became characterised by the politics of petroleum production.

As oil production soured, entrepreneurship and technological initiative grew at low pace as no enabling environment to utilize innovation existed. Military coups and counter coups precipitated the perilous state of the society, nurtured corruption and tolerated environmental plunder. Today, as Nigeria enters into the new millennium with civil rule, the global trend poses several challenges to the country.

The key challenges facing the country are food insecurity and morbidity, environmental degradation, low literacy rate and poor requisite skill development, inadequate energy supply, low technological development, corruption and economic malaise. These challenges cripple Nigeria's integration into the global social system and imply that the country is not advantageously

placed to exploit the resources of the global system. As a result, the country and its citizenry will remain passive recipients of the positive effects of the global system.

There is no doubt that the potentials exist in Nigeria for resourceful integration into the global system. Because the global system thrives on the fluid movement of resources across the world, globalization implies that Nigeria need to look inward and design strategies of meeting its local needs as a launching pad for springing into the global system. No more, no less!

CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS:

Because what has been enunciated in this paper has policy implications for Nigeria as a developing country, there is a need to make some practical recommendations which would help her be well integrated in the new global system. These include:

- (1) Nigeria should embark upon strategic development of her human resources. This development should encompass motivational incentives that will keep them committed to our national ideals. Also opportunities to utilize relevant technologies that will build their capacity should be created.
- (2) The country needs a structure to assess and determine the various ways in which globalization affects the country and evolve the most pertinent means of sustaining them.
- (3) The Nigerian government must activate public sentiments about the positive ideals of democratic governance.
- (4) There is a need to make available a well designed programme of activities for transnational firms operating in Nigeria.
- (5) Development planning should have

human development as priority (in the areas of income, health and education).

- (6) On the international level, the Nigerian government should team up with other third world countries and press for a global reform of the United Nations, including its Security Council, World trade organization, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF). For example, poverty has increased in African Countries (including Nigeria) where structural adjustment programmed were imposed by the IMF and World Bank. This has resulted in the destruction of public services and loss of jobs.

CONCLUSION:

Today, we live in a world of rapidity and complexity where the rate of change reinforces the complexity of interdependence. The network of social ties has become increasingly woven in virtually every facet of life-politics, language, education, health, economics and even spirituality – in such a way that the consequences of contemporary events radiate instantaneously around the world (Toffler, 1970).

This paper has attempted to synthesize issues on an important component of contemporary social thought: globalization. This is done within the context of sociological analysis. It argues that if Nigeria were to fit in the new millennium and be a co-participant in international (global) affair, there is an urgent need to pay attention to the challenges posed by globalization.

The key issues raised and discussed are economic globalization, the globalization of environmental concern, global governance and human rights and social living. These issues affect the individual as well as human population. But the major focus of the paper has been to assess Nigeria's position in the global system. In doing this, the various

challenges facing her proper integration received attention. This include: overcoming food insecurity, ensuring environmental management, sustaining human resources development, ensuring effective and efficient energy supply and utilization, achieving governance and economic reconstruction, and developing science and technology.

The above constraints reveal that Nigeria is as of now poorly integrated into the global social system. However, with her human and natural resources, potentials to address this poor integration abound.

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