



Globalization: A Multi-Faceted Terrain

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ABSTRACT

This paper registers that globalization is a multifaceted phenomenon that can be viewed from the socio-economic, political and cultural perspectives. The paper explore the globalization theory which calls for the unification of one global village and also looks at forces driving globalization such as international free trade and investment which are highly influenced by information highway. The essays also looks at both the liberal and radical perspectives surrounding the process of globalization and reveals that the liberal viewpoint sees globalization as a necessary evil whilst the radical perspective sees the process as promoting socio-economic and political misery within the nation-states especially those in the Global-South. Finally, the paper attempts to reflect on the socio-economic and political impact of globalization on the nation-states and suggests some alternatives which could be employed so as for the process to benefit all within its umbrella.

Key words: Globalization, Liberal Perspective, Radical Perspective, Nation-state, Democracy.

INTRODUCTION

Globalization is a multifaceted phenomenon that can be viewed from the socio-economic, political and cultural perspectives. However, its origins as a global process are linked with different time frames and events in history. Firstly, globalization as a system which merged world economies so as to be interdependent entities has its roots in the historical times. As such, it perpetrated historical process or human civilization (Dean, 1998; Morrow & Torres in Barbules & Torres, 2000). On a similar note, the emergence of

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world religions like Christianity and Islam marked the beginning of globalization. This is because these religions' dominance and influence on the world scene have culminated in world citizens. People across the world now share similarities in values, norms and beliefs hence the spirit of brother and sisterhood across the globe (Morrow & Torres in Barbules and Torres, 2000).

Furthermore, globalization can be traced from the birth of capitalism as the dominant world system of trade. The system uses free trade and investment to spread across the globe thereby engulfing all nations of the world. Lastly, the globalization theory is also used to explain the origins of globalization. This theory premises that, the world should be one village. The idea of a global village is supported by the notion that events across the world determine each other or are informed by those that occur in other places elsewhere (Giddens cited in Inoguchi & Marsh, 2008).

Globalization Defined

Globalization as a world process can be defined and understood in various ways depending on one's philosophical position. According to *The Globalization* (2006), it is conceived as a process which is characterized by great interaction and integration among people, companies and governments of various nations of the world. Its major driving forces are international free trade and investment which are highly influenced by information highway. One critical issue pertaining to globalization is that it has compressed the world into a single economic, political and cultural unit although the third world appears to be on the painful side of the scale. The use of the term third world suggests their socio-economic and political positions in the world scene (Morrow & Torres cited in Barbules & Torres, 2000).

Berman and Machin (cited in Lee & Vivarelli 2009:39) further affirms what globalization entails by purporting that, it is "the integration of national markets and diminished economic importance of distance due to technological changes in communication and transport". This implies that information technology in the form of telephones; internet, television and transport networks have produced linkages across the world. The different lives across the globe are now intertwined as a result of information technology. It is therefore worth arguing that, the process of globalization has provided a sense of immediacy, reduced distance and time between places (Brah, Hickman & Macan, 1999). Furthermore, some see globalization as an ongoing process that has polarized the economic sphere thereby pushing the third world in great poverty and political instabilities (Adesonji, 2003). In a nutshell, globalization is all about the increase in socio-economic, political and cultural interaction and integration among nations of the world. As such, nations which fail to be part of the globalization process become isolated, thus reducing their chances to 'prosperity.'

Arguments and Perspectives Surrounding Globalization

The process of globalization faces criticism from a number of divided critics, among them the liberal and radical perspectives. Goodhart (2001: 528) indicates that the globalization controversy consists not so much in perceptions clashing with reality as in ambiguous reality supporting numerous and sometimes contradictory perceptions.

The Liberal Perspective

The pro-globalists argue that globalization has the potential to reduce and solve world poverty and world problems. As a result, they see the mission of globalization as a means to promote the socio-economic and political development of all nations across the world. This assertion is based on a number of reasons advanced by various scholars. Legrain (2004) for example alleges that globalization, through free trade makes the nations rich. This is because free trade calls for countries to compete and specialize on what they can produce and manage efficiently. It is assumed that the produce would result in the accumulation of wealth. This should further be coupled with an open or free market economy. The success of the republic of China is attributed to the freeing of her economy to the rest of the world.

Similarly, Dollar and Kraay (cited in Legrain, 2004) further affirm that, globalization helps the poor countries including their citizens to develop, that is raising their standard of living. The justification of the arguments is based on the Stolper-Samuelson theory. The theory is based on the premise that people or countries benefit extra income from what they have in abundance (Harrison & Macmillan, 2006). Third world countries for example have unskilled labor in abundance. As such, they can be able to provide their services to labor intensive multinational corporations for some wages to help them out of poverty (Santarelli & Figini cited in Lee & Vivarelli, 2004). Basically the liberal perspective subscribes to the ideal that globalization positively breeds market integration, technological development as well as the improvement of migration of people from one world region to the other.

Although the liberals see the mission of globalization as mainly developmental oriented, they certainly overlook other critical issues. In the first place, the economic environment across the globe is biased towards the Global North. One reason could be that the Global North prepared themselves well for globalization and therefore the Global South states are ill prepared for a formidable competition. On the other hand, the globalization process is working against the third world because of the exploitative nature of the process. As a result, the living standards of the majority citizens are deteriorating instead of improving (Logan, 2002). On this score, the globalization is seen as a skewed process which enriches the global capitalist class at the same time relegating the Global South to a state of economic despair.

The Radical Perspective

The major thesis according to the radicals is that, globalization causes and deepens world misery. As a consequence, the radicals view the mission of globalization as a means to perpetuate the control of the world socio-economic and political environment by the Global North. The basic mission of accumulating resources remains essential to the process of globalization. This therefore affirms the contention that the process of globalization has been designed to further exploit the Global South by the Global North. Various arguments have been advanced by the radicals to substantiate their stand point. Hirst and Thompson (cited in Logan, 2002) argued that, globalization perpetuates the western capitalist ideology and control of the world economy. It is therefore viewed as a historic process modified through the injection of information technology so as to give it speed and immediacy. Contrary to the doctrine that fiscal austerity, privatization and market liberalization would automatically trigger wealth for all nations, Stiglitz (2003) charges that the opposite has been the truth on the ground of many developing countries.

On the same vein, it is believed that globalization has not changed the world economic situation. The global economy is skewed towards the Global North with the USA taking control of the whole affair. The restrictions on the flow of capital, immigration and markets protection by the Global North are manifestation of imbalanced global relations between North and South (Hirst & Thompson cited in Graig, 2003). The control over world economy is therefore enjoyed by some multinational corporations which have spread their dominance into the third world countries.

The radical paradigm to globalization further notes that the global institutions that currently exist are proven to be unsatisfactory because they often serve a limit of parochial interests, and have remained unaccountable to large sections of the world community (Rizvi, 2003). In this case, absolute reform of the process is speedily necessary if at all both the Global North and Global South are expected to benefit.

THE IMPACT OF GLOBALIZATION ON THE NATION STATE'S CULTURE AND DEMOCRACY

Globalization has immense impact on culture, democracy and the development process of the nation-states. The anti-globalists however, argue that the adverse effects of globalization on the nation states are a result of America's single dominance of the world's ideology, economy and culture (Dean, 1998). The other question that often comes to the globalization debates is that regarding how the development process of globalization can

be regulated through democratic means so that the process could be transformed to benefit all.

Globalization and Culture

Cultural globalization reflects the interaction and integration of world cultures. It is believed to be promoting an identical culture based on the assimilation of the American culture (Hayness cited in McGrew & Poku, 2007). This process is championed by global transnational corporations. The third world cultures especially in sub Saharan Africa have been Americanized. The American cultural influence in sub Saharan region manifests itself in consumer goods and services, language, the changes in societal institutions and other forms of cultural attributes (Ben-Rafael in Tiankui, Sasaki & Peilin, 2006; Dhanapala, 2001).

The presence of transnational corporations within the various nation-states and the power of information technology influenced the third world citizens to be consumers of American goods and services (Dean, 1998). American goods and services which have become part of the cultures of most nation-states include among others, food, music and communication network systems. Similarly, English which is a language spoken mostly in the Global North including the USA, is now regarded as the language of globalization. The mastery of English language has therefore become a necessity for all nation-states citizens and the exclusion of other indigenous languages especially those from the Global South is definitely a worrisome issue. Globalization appears to be promoting cultural assimilation which ultimately jeopardizes the identity of the masses especially from the Global South.

Furthermore, the media industry with particular reference to the film and music sector, have exerted a lot of influence on the lives of young generations in third world countries. This influence from the music and film industry has created a subculture that is unique to the young generation. Young Africans are now succumbing to the notion of considering their own cultures as inferior compared to the western culture. As such, the generation gap has widened hence the old generation blaming the industry for moral decadence prevalent among the youth in the global south (Dhanapala, 2001). To some degree, globalization has led to cultural synchronization since it introduces a single culture centered on consumerism, mass media, Americana and the English Language (Scholte, 2000).

In view of the dominance of the American culture across the world, the nation-states' cultures have been rendered obsolete. This is because the influence has eroded the cultural values, beliefs, norms and other cultural symbols of the nations. These have been replaced by an Americanized global culture (Hayness cited in McGrew & Poku, 2007). As a result, third world citizens have been subjected to a standardized consumption lifestyle influenced by transnational corporations like Macdonald, Coca Cola, Microsoft and many others. This influence has further impacted on people's

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perceptions of the world, family relations and general attitudes towards the states (Dean, 1998).

Globalization and Economics

According to Mittelman (cited in McGrew & Poku, 2007), economic globalization can be viewed from a broad dimension. There is the dimension that concern itself with trade liberalization based on free trade and investment. The other one is the structural adjustment programme which has affected most third world nation states. This is mainly led by the IMF and the World Bank. The pro-globalists perceive free trade and investment as a major breakthrough towards global economic development. This is because they view it as a means through which nation- states can accumulate wealth through trade, receive foreign goods, and create jobs for the poor (Legrain, 2004). However, it is quite evident that economic globalization has had some adverse effects on the economic development of the nation-states. Graig (2004) argue that globalization has opened up new opportunities for the developed countries to expand their economies further. Their dominance of the global market is testimony to this assertion. This is further substantiated by the fact that of all the giant multinational corporations, none is indigenous to the third world continent. Similarly, 5 largest global companies have combined sales greater than the total incomes of the 46 world's poorest countries (Graig, 2004). This therefore is an indication that globalization is not meant for the poorest third world countries. Stiglitz (2003:6) reflects that the Western countries have pushed poor countries to eliminate trade barriers, but kept their own barriers, preventing developing countries from exporting their agricultural products and so depriving them of desperately needed export income.

Furthermore, economic globalization is controlled by international financial institutions and transnational corporations. As a result, they have imposed their neo-liberal ideology to run the global market (Dean, 1998). The neoliberal market forces are working against the third world as the third world countries are used as markets for the goods from the Global North. In the process, the north protects its own markets so that it becomes difficult for the goods from the third world to penetrate their markets (Morrow & Torres cited in Barbules & Torres, 2000). According to Tafa (2004:6), neo-liberalism is an uneven and contradictory process by the Group of 7 richest countries, trans-national monopolies, the World Bank and the IMF.

The unfavorable terms of trade as dictated by the multinational corporations have rendered the nation-states powerless. Governments from the third world countries for example are no longer controlling their own economic policies. Their policies are determined by their relationship with the monetary institutions especially through their credit assessment (Dean, 1998). In other words, countries which fail to pay back their loans are discredited. As a result, they have to face harsh penalties through the wheels

of globalization. The Structural Adjustment Programmes, (SAPS), privatization and foreign direct investment for example, impacted negatively on third world states control of their economies (Legrain, 2004). Their actions have resulted in high unemployment rates, redundancies in domestic skills, human rights abuses and loss of finance. In addition, privatization has shifted the decision making process from the states to the private sector. All these have undermined the credibility and sovereignty of the nation- states (Pinto, 2000 and Dean, 1998).

Globalization and Politics

Political globalization entails the democratization of all nations of the world. It is believed that, democracy opens up opportunities for political empowerment and economic prosperity (Bhagwati, 2004). In other words, through democracy governments are able to run their own domestic policies and resources properly. Democracy is encouraged in nation states because it is a way of protecting the interests of the transnational corporations. The implication therefore is that democracy is a key used by the Global North to unlock foreign jurisdiction, the major intention being to amass wealth.

Moreover, Hirst and Thompson (cited in Logan, 2004) observed that, the current global political process is driven by the Bretton Woods Institutions through information technology. The institutions are perpetrating the western hegemony over the Third World countries. This western hegemony displayed over the Global North is based on the American ideology as the champion of world democracy. Hayness (cited in McGrew & Poku, 2007) opined that, the democracy championed by America is focused on a standard democracy template or frame work. In other words, all nations assisted by America to democratize have to adopt and assimilate the American system of democracy. This standard template among others includes financial support, multiparty system, upholding the rule of law including civil- military relations (Hayness in McGrew & Poku, 2007).

The critics of the American democratization ideology have blamed it for failing to give most third world countries legitimate democracy. Carothers (cited in McGrew & Poku, 2007) have observed that, USA injects a lot of financial resource in promoting democracy but later fail to make it sustainable. Countries like Iraq and Afghanistan are on the verge of becoming failed states because of lack of proper direction from American democratization process. Furthermore, the American ideology is used to paralyze the socio-economic and political systems of those who do not subscribe to their ideology. They perform this through the use of international monetary institutions which infringe on the sovereignty of the nation-states (Mengisteab cited in Logan, 2002). This infringement manifests itself in economic sanctions, military invasions and adoption of programmes which are incompatible with African realities among others. As a result, the citizens of most third world countries are revolting against their states

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because the states policies and programmes are failing to provide relevant services to the citizens (Pinto, 2000).

On another score, Botswana's domestic policies fall short of meeting the needs of the nation because they are aligned to global dictates. The privatization policy, cost sharing and the free market system are some of the domestic policies which do not benefit the citizens. It is therefore quite evident that the nation-states especially in the Global South are no longer performing their mandates as sovereign entities. Among others, they no longer protect, control and even predict the lives of their citizens. All these are decided by the agents of globalization and their policies. Scholte (2000) reflects that since the end of the Cold War liberal democracy has spread like a bush fire all over the world-the military are out in Latin America, apartheid has ended in South Africa and the Berlin wall is down-a clear indication that the democratization and globalization are making an impact of the world societies.

AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH TO THE OPERATIONS OF GLOBALIZATION

Firstly, it is worth arguing that the globalization process possesses both good and bad intentions. The evils associated with it are mainly a result of its operational principles, that is, the ideological forces that drive it. The idea of globalization itself is not bad-what is wrong are the operational principles. Nations across the world should therefore dedicate their efforts towards modifying the current global operational principles. Latham (cited in Logan, 2002) charge that, globalization has created a homogenizing ideology that is making it impossible for decision making to be made from outside. As such, the ideology acts like a boundary which blocks any alternative. In other words, given the current global socio-economic and political scenario, it is very difficult for third world countries to resist globalization. This is because any move towards independency like the 1970's third world move toward import substitution can never succeed because of market forces (Mandle, 2003).

However, some authorities have made some suggestions towards alleviating the current global socio-economic and political operations. The internationalists believe internationalization is the suitable process to run globalization. Internationalization is the process of formulating processes that accommodate all conditions across the globe (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2004). In other words, global socio-economic and political policies should be adaptable to the peculiar conditions across all nation-states. Suitable policies for example include those that allow for the promotion of the local skills and knowledge to produce local goods and services (Tafa, 2004). As a result, nations across the world would be able to live together but maintaining their differences. In this case globalization could be seen to be promoting global

pluralism at the same time cherishing socio-economic and political interdependence.

Pinto (2000) suggests that nation-states should not allow the Global North to take away their sovereignty. They should instead cling to their absolute sovereignty as a way of protecting their self interests. Furthermore, Pinto (2000) reasons that nation-states should also work collaboratively towards improving their socio-economic and political positions than just oppose globalization. The same sentiments were shared by Adesoji (2003) who purported that, African nations can only be relevant in globalization if they can be united, conscious and proud of their heritage. This assertion suits the sub-Saharan region because the regional countries have vast socio-economic and political differences. The regional economic development is therefore installed by countries facing globalization as individual entities. As a result, the Global North take advantage of their differences to exploit them further.

Ornstein and Hunkins (2004) on the other hand, believe that globalization can be improved through incorporating an international component in national curricula across the world. In this regard, each nation's school curricula should be used as tools to enhance and promote a common understanding about the international society and cooperation. The understanding therefore is that, each nation would continue to promote its own culture, values and political economic systems. This situation avails the opportunity for students across the world to have common understanding about global peace and cooperation (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2004).

The thesis that one can bring forward in view of the above argument is that, common core knowledge and skills can help bring mutual understanding across the world. However, on the socio-economic, political and cultural part, the Global North will always dominate the world scene. This is because the process of change is challenging and provoking. As a result, the Global North countries cannot easily comprehend absolute change and again they cannot easily lose such a lucrative adventure. We need to look at the subject of globalization from a cultural-historical background so that we could match it with the values and morals of every world society.

CONCLUSION

Globalization as a process of world socio-economic and political integration and interdependency is not a new phenomenon. In its current form, globalization is more pronounced because it is driven by controversial policies and ideologies which are having some adverse effects on the third world countries. This is because it is another stage in capitalist expansion driven by digitization, satellite communication and the internet (Friedman cited in Logan, 2002).

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The effects of globalization continue to impact negatively on the third world countries because of the operations of the Bretton Woods Institutions (IMF and the World Bank). Their SAPs conditionalities to third world countries with economic problems have exacerbated the situation (Tafa 2002). Many governments have been forced to abandon their existing domestic policies thereby acting according to the demands of the institutions. As a result, the state has to resign the role of providing law and order but only create an environment conducive for investment (Berman & Machin cited in Lee & Vivarelli, 2004).

Globalization on the other hand, is dominated by the Global North because of the pronounced socio-economic and political advantage over the Global South. This has therefore resulted in a situation of complete dependency and assimilation by the third world countries. The third world countries for instance have assimilated the socio-economic and political attributes of the developed countries and they tend to see all that is western is good. This state of affairs has rendered the nation-states powerless and therefore are subjected to all forms of exploitation. The debate on globalization will probably intensify with the march of time provided the globalization scale remains skewed and biased. The process of creating a just global socio-economic and political community needs to undergo transformation so that all those within the planet earth can enjoy the seeds of the process regardless of their geographical location. For now, the process of globalization remains multi-faceted and complex.

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