GLOBALIZATION AND ITS VICTIMS

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Abstract

This work is committed to challenge the conventional wisdom that globalization is a positive sum game in which all the "players" benefit as against a "Zero-sum game". On the contrary the work asserts that globalization is a master of disaster for the perpetuation of Third World poor countries, nay Africa's dependence and underdevelopment. Using the Marxian political economy framework of analysis, the paper discovered victors and victims in the globalization game. The victors are those nations that are characterized by diversified export -oriented economies, path-breaking innovations in information and communications technology and well developed infrastructure-physical and social. On the other side, the losers or victims are those countries dependent on the export of a narrow range of raw material (primary products), weak scientific and technological base and poor or non-existent physical and social infrastructure. While the North America and Western Europe countries fall within the first categories, the Third World countries of Africa, Asia and South America fall within the second category. However the study finds Africa as the worst victim of globalization. The study discovers that, the structural imbalance (a major feature of Africa's relations with the West) a debt overhang, failed or non- existent infrastructure (made possible by official corruption), the unhealthy market policies of Breton Woods institutions, its position in the "digital divide", non-conducive investment environment, lack of economic integration, technological backwardness and lack of innovation, which have become the main characteristics of Africa in her relations with the developed world, are not as it were, good kits of the globalization game. Resultantly, we see Africa as been methodologically programmed to lose out in the globalization game. This paper does not see the solution in delinking from globalization as this may not be realizable. The way forward it recommends; is a technology driven economy and, Africa's governments' commitment to enormous resources into social and physical infrastructures that will promote investment, diversify export and encourage genuine economic integration in the Africa continent. These in addition to boosting the volume of trade in Africa, will also confer them leverage in trade negotiations. To achieve these, the paper also recommends that African governments should first of all use their sovereignty to capture the economic rents of the natural resource export economy from the foreign transnational corporations and invest same in other sectors. This we believe will bring a forward and backward linkage effect to the economy and allow for diversification which will boost industrial output and industrial capital.

KEY WORDS: Globalization, Zero Sum Game, Marxian Political Economy and Development.

Introduction

Globalization is a phenomenon that has assumed an important part of political economy and international economy relations. Much has been written in the immediate past three and a half decade or so on globalization and economic gains that one may at the onset have despair of saying anything on the subject. Nevertheless, a careful look over the field and considering avalanche of perceptions, frequently, mutually contradictory, which have been expressed already, one cannot but be surprised by the disproportional share of the discussion which has been accounted for by analysis from the developed world. This is mostly a "Southward" looking view point by benefactors (apologist) of the current globalized international systems, neo classical and liberal reformers and radicals from the global "North". It is thus only pertinent that we fill this gap in the literature by considering the question of globalization and its victims from the view point of the man looking towards the global "North". This perspective likened globalization to the proverbial African mouse. It gnaws the feet and blows over the wound so tactically that its victims hardly feel the pain. The sweet sensation on the feet induces its victims to sleep deeper and deeper. The damage can only be noticed in the morning when the wound begins to bleed; from then the pain increases moment by moment. In the case of globalization the damage is even more profound, because as the country bleeds, all-the citizens feel the pain. Like our proverbial mouse, the globalizers (developed and industrialized countries) get richer at the expense of the victims (poor states of the third world) and the damage is not easily noticed.

This work is thus committed to challenge the conventional wisdom that globalization is a positive sum game in which all the "players" benefit as against a "Zero-sum game". On the contrary, the work seeks to assert that globalization is a master of disaster for the perpetuation of Third World poor countries, nay Africa's dependence and underdevelopment.

In doing this, the paper will adopt the Marxian political economy approach as the framework for analyzing the implications and consequences of globalization on the victims of the poor countries of the third world, especially Sub-Saharan Africa.

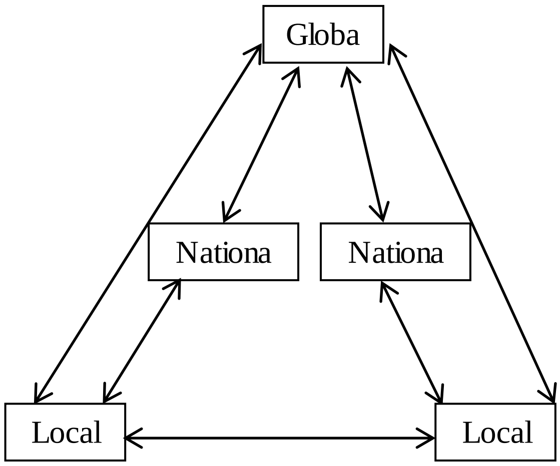
This paper will be divided into three sections. The first section deals with introduction. The second section will conceptualize and review literature on globalization, outcome of previous globalization for the African Third World. The third section will be conclusion and recommendations.

Globalization

Globalization is *a* slippery and elusive concept. Despite intensifying interest in the phenomenon of globalization, beginning from the 1980's, the term is still used to refer variously to a process, a policy, a marketing strategy, an approach, a predicament or even an ideology. The term has thus acquired significant emotive force. Some view it as a process that is loaded with benefit for all- a key to future global economic development and also inevitable and-irreversible; Others view it with suspicion, hostility and even fear, believing that it increases inequality within and between states, threatens employment, negatively impacts on living standards, and thwarts social progress.

In spite of the avalanche of literature on the subject of globalization, the concept has remained largely inexact. This informs the reason for the-absence of a single theory of the subject. McGraw (1992) suggested that an initial exposition of the globalization perspective was carried out by Modeski in his book "The principles of World Politics" published in 1972. Although it is difficult to reduce globalization to a single theme or theory, the outburst of literature on globalization which emerged in the 1980's and 1990s have focused on global trends with a monumental implication on politics for the Third World and Africa in particular. Heywood (2002:138) defines globalization "as the emergence of a complex web of interconnectedness that means that our lives are increasingly shaped by events that occur and decisions that are made, at a great distance from us". To him, the central feature of globalization is therefore that geographical distance is of diminishing relevance, and that territorial boundaries, such as those between nation states, are becoming less significant. By this Heywood does not mean that globalization implies that "the local" and "the national" are subordinated to "the global". Rather, it highlights the deepening as well as the broadening of political process, in the sense that local, national and global events constantly interact. The resulting systemic interdependence is captured by Heywood (2002:138) as shown in the figure below:

System Interdependence



This interconnectedness has spawned is multidimensional and is linked to homogenization as cultural, social, economic and political diversity are destroyed in the process of globalization. McGraw (1992) as cited by Nna, Taylor and Igwe (2011:159) defined globalization as the "multiplicity of linkages and interconnections that transcend the nation-state (and by implication the societies) which makes up the modern world system. It defines a process through which events, decisions and activities in one part of the world can come to have significant consequences for individual and communities in quite distant parts of the globe". For Akindele et.al (2002) in Nna, Taylor and Igwe (2011:159), globalization is viewed as referring "to the process of the intensification of economic, political, social and cultural relations across international boundaries". It is principally aimed at the transcendental homogenization of socio-economic and political theory across the globe. It equally deals with the increasing breakdown of trade barriers and the increasing integration of world market (Fafowora 1988:5). Akpuru-Aja and Emeribe (2000:361-2) view globalization as reflecting;

> *The greater openness of national and international economic to greater flow of trade, finance, capital, high technology, FDI, and market integration offerings. The engineering, mechanism of. globalization remains the revolution in science and technology, particularly as it affects transportation and electro-communication " systems. The next result is the creation of a global village, a single market system, a global factory and a global office. One result of globalization is grotesque and dangerous polarization between people and countries benefiting from the system and those that are merely recipients and reactionaries of the effects.*

Put differently, as Ohuabunwa (1999:20) once opined: "Globalization 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 human endeavors".

This manifests from its push of free-market economies, liberal democracy, "good governance", gender equality and environmental sustainability among other holistic values for the people of member states. (Nna, Taylor and Igwe, 2011). The process of globalization is impelled by a series of cumulative and conjectural crisis in the international division of labor and the global distribution of economic and political power, in global finance, in the operation of national states and in the decline of Keynesian welfare state, and the established social contract between labor and government. Infact, its hallmark of free-market capitalism has been aided among factors, by the sudden though expected changes within the physiology of global political community in recent times (Akindele, 1990).

In similar vein, Mactroan (1990) defined globalization from the institutional perspective as the spread of capitalism. It is however pertinent to pontificate that it was the collapse of the Eastern Block in the early 1990s that led to them emergence and-ascendancy of a global economy that is primarily structured and governed by the interest of western behemoth countries; thus facilitating the integration of most economies into global capitalist economy.

It is established in the reviewed literature; (with the exception of few writers) that globalization has occasioned a phenomenal transformation in the landscape of the global economy (Outara, 1997, World Bank 2001, and UNDP, 1997). What appears to continue to be a subject of serious debate is whether the process of globalization have been beneficial to, or can benefit all the countries of the world.

David Held et al (1999) identify two major opposing views of the globalization debate- the hyper globalizers and those who maintain that globalization is real, unstoppable and that its phenomenal transformation is affecting everything-the nature of our economics, the structure of state and our basic institutions. Through increasing economic interdependence, and the intensified free reign of competition that all the economies are involved in a global scale is believed to be beneficial to all the players in the globalization game. Thus, the advocates of globalization made the following promises of globalization.

First its crusaders peddled it as a panacea to the many economic problems of nations, especially those of the weak economics in the South. It was presented as an instrument for world development that will improve globally the living standards of people by sharing knowledge and the fruits of human labor across national boundaries.

Secondly, it is presented as capable of promoting the much-needed peace the world aspires to attain. Thomas Friedman in the "Lexus and the Olive Tree" (cited in Awake, May 22, 2002) argues that globalization is a great disincentive to war making as it increases the economic cost of doing so in an increasing interdependent world.

From this perspective, they concluded that globalization stimulates an unprecedented economic growth, technological progress, raises the income level of consumers, helps to create jobs, raises living standards, material prosperity and lower prices for goods and services for all countries involved in the global trading system. (Owugah, 2004).

Echoing similar optimistic note, liberals conceive of it as a tool that would reduce inequality among and within nations. They assume that as a world economy, a global increase in transactions driven by technology would benefit all. Hence Anne Kruger, IMF's first Deputy Managing Director asserted that globalization would "constitute to be a vehicle for closing the gap between the industrial countries and the rest of the world" (Kruger in Owugah 2004).

On the contrary, globalization has its discontents- referred to as globalization skeptics by Held et al (1999) as well those who are not so optimistic or sanguine about its outcome those are referred to as globalization transformationalists by Held et al (1999). Here, globalization is seen as nothing new-the same old world with all the asymmetric left intact. Globalization is seen essentially as a Western phenomenon and should not be expected to be the basis for universal progress. In line with this flow of thought, some see it as Western imposition on the entire world, while others still refer to it as American imposition on the rest of the World, especially the weak economics of the South. It is worthy of note that Susan Strange, a British economist had earlier drawn a similar conclusion when she referred to globalization as an attempt by the USA to make the rest of the world safe and welcoming to American capitalism (Strange in Owugah 2011). To this end, she adumbrated, successive governments had broken barriers to foreign investment and promoted powerful capital mobility. It is interesting to note that an economist from a core capitalist and developed state like Britain will see globalization as a tool for American imperialism. This goes a long way to lend credence to the claims that after all globalization is only a tool for Western imperialism on the weaker nations of the Third World. Thus, the skeptics argue that globalization not only widens the gap between the “haves and the have-nots" but the activities of transnational corporations fuelled by profit maximization motive hurt rather than helps the environment. They also argued that the free movement of finance can destabilize developing countries, especially when corporations, for reason of inclement business environment, suddenly withdraw their money from them, as evidenced by the 1998 Asian financial crisis. Globalization critics who have drawn attention to the emergence of new and deeply entrenched patterns of inequality: thus see globalization as a game of winners and losers. The winners are invariably identified as transnational corporations and the industrially advanced states generally, but particularly the United States, European Union and Japan; the losers, in contrast are the developing world, where wages are low, regulation is weak or non-existent, and where production is increasingly oriented around global markets rather than domestic needs (Heywood 2000, Akpuru-Aja, 2001). Whereas the US, Japan and European economics grow strong in the 1980s and 1990s on the basis of globalization and technological advancement, absolute living standard fell in the poorest parts of the world, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa, where forty (40) percent of the people are living below the poverty line. Wallerstein (1984) in world system theory, drawing on the Marxist/Dependency view of capitalism as essentially exploitative, highlighted the structural condition of uneven economic and political development that led to growing Inequality between "core" and "peripheral" parts of the economic world System. Thus global tension has come to be seen less in terms of East versus West and more in terms of a North-South or "Core"-Periphery divides (Heywood 2001).

From the analysis of the literature so far, we wish to align with the critics of the hyper globalizers and insist that globalization is not a win-win game but a game of winners and losers: like we have stated above, the losers are the poor countries of the Third World, notably Africa. This is because, while the East and South East Asian States are perceived and projected as having escaped the vicious circle of poverty by benefiting from the globalization process, Africa has not been so fortunate. Factually speaking, its situation has continued to get worse over the years. Africa's share in global trade, even for its traditional primary commodity exports has declined. In the area of attracting foreign direct investment, it has not fared any better. The income gap relative to the advanced economies of the world has as a matter of fact widened (Owugah 2004). There is therefore no doubt to recognize Africa as the chief loser and thus the victim in the "game" of globalization. We will thus concentrate on Africa as the victim of globalization and try to show further proofs and reasons why Africa is rightly so identified. In doing this, we shall first of all consider the outcome of what some globalization skeptics refer to as "previous globalization" for the Africa continent.

Outcomes of Previous Globalization for the Africa Continent

Contrary to the view held by the hyper globalists that globalization is a new phenomenon, taking cue from Howe (2000:2) and Walking (1997:5) we take the position that globalization is not new. While the current globalization processes may be different, the essential features remain the integration of the World's economy. Krugman (1995) cited in Walking (1997:5) was substantially right when he observed.

> *The establishment of the great trading companies formed in the seventeenth century such as the East-Indian company and the Royal African Company-colonialism, and the opening of the Suez canal, and the union pacific railroad, were all defining moments in the creation of a global economy.*

The first wave of globalization which lasted for over three hundred and fifty years occasioned the pillage of Africa's natural resources and amounted for the majority of Africans enslavement and deportation and as, Howe (2000) would put it... "The continued wrenching dislocation of normal life". This phase was closely succeeded by the colonization of Africa by some Western powers.

Like this present wave of globalization which apparently have an "aura of virtue' (Herman, 1999:1), colonialism, we were told, was part of the white man's burden of civilizing Africa. This however, was contrary to the reality which was that colonialism was a response to the contradiction of the capitalist mode of production. Markets had to be sought for manufactured goods, which were beyond domestic consumption and new sources of raw material had to be secured (Nna, Taylor and Igwe 2011). The resultant effects are obvious; the African economics where “disarticulated” (Ake, 1981) and integrated into the global economy as primary products exporters and importers of manufacturing goods.

The asymmetric which characterized colonialism brought in an era of unequal economic relationship between Africa and Europe with unfavorable terms of trade and balance of payment problems for Africa. Till date Africa's economic crisis is traceable to the structural imbalance created by years of colonial conquest. The present wave of globalization, like the previous one, is also been heralded as the solution to Africa's economic problems. There is the strongly held conviction by some neo-classical and liberal economic theories, represented by Breton Wood institutions, and some Western national governments that the expansion of the global economy is synonymous with universal prosperity. Liberalization of trade is accepted as a desirable goal to be embraced by all nations because it is said to bring about comparative advantage. The role of national governments is therefore not to regulate markets but to facilitate their relentless expansion by removing barriers to trade and investment.

In spite of these promises for globalization, the evidence on ground is quite overwhelming that the new globalization is not a win-win game. That we live in an increasing shrinking world, "a global village" if you like, is not in doubt. The obvious fact is that even if the world has become a global village, it certainly is not true that we all belong to the same family within the village, This gives credence to why, in spite of the phenomenal progress that globalization has meant for some countries, most developing countries especially Africa have been left behind.

Expectedly, there are profound fears that the new wave of globalization is also bypassing Africa. Kiikpoye, (2006); Howe, (2000); and Watking (1997). It was the reaction to this fear that made the Ugandan President; Yoweri Musoveni called on African nations to fight globalization. To him it must be fought because it is the same old order with new means of control, new means of oppression and new means of marginalization.

The question which readily arises is; why is Africa losing out in the globalizati on game once again? In addition to the structural imbalances inherent in the global economy and the consequences this has brought to bear on Africa, the answer also lie in the nature of the new economy, which from all indications Africa is patently ill-equipped to gainfully participate.

Africa in the New World Economy

As stated earlier, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Trade, financial flows, foreign direct investment, science and technology etc, are the driving force behind globalization. It is therefore not accidental that the winners in the globalization game so far are nations characterized by diversified export-oriented economies, path-breaking innovations in information and communications technology and well developed infrastructure-physical and social. On the other hand, the losers are those countries dependent on the export of a narrow range of primary products, weak scientific and technological base and poor or non-existent physical and social infrastructure.

Africa has always had unfavorable terms of trade in its trading relations with the rest of the world due largely to the asymmetric and imperfections that characterize such relationship. Her "disarticulated" economy that was conditioned to serve as a source of raw materials for European industries and a market for their manufactured products has never allowed her (Africa) to tangibly benefit in her trade with the West. Africa's performance under the current globalization is even worsening. Peterso (cited in Los Angeles Times, June 1, 2006) citing recent World Bank sources, report that “Africa accounts for barely 1% of global economic output and 2% of world trade. Its share of global manufactured export is near zero".

As bad as it is for Africa to specialize in the export of non-diversified primary products, worse still is her record of shrinking share of such in world trade. It is argued that due to Africa's technological backwardness in production and other related reasons, the continent has lost its leading role or position as exporter of raw materials (Ake: 1981).

Again, a debt overhang problem discourages domestic and foreign direct investments. The new globalization has witnessed a phenomenal increase in foreign direct investment (FDI). The distribution of such benefits from (FDI) is skewed in favor of the developed world and the newly industrialized countries of East and South East Asia.

To sum it up, Africa's position in the "digital divide" - explained as "the inequities created by ICT availability, affordability, access and capacity" (Krugman and Verables 1995); is most worrisome. As at 1998, some 88% of all internet users lived in industrialized nations which harbor less than 15% of the world's population. Half of the global population has never made a phone call in their lives and most of them are in Africa. Africa has less than 30 million phones for its population of not less than 650 million people. As at 1990, over 90% of data on Africa were stored in Europe and the U.S. A (Nna, Taylor & Igwe. 2011). The implication of the "digital divide" for poor countries is most succinctly captured by Martin Khor when he posited that;

> *This imbalance leads to polarization between the few countries and groups that gain and the many countries and groups that lose out or are marginalized. Globalization, wealth concentration and marginalization are therefore linked through the same process. In this process, investment, resources, growth and modern technology are focused in a few countries (mainly in North America, Europe, Japan and East Asian newly industrialized countries (NIC). A majority of developing countries are excluded*

from the process or are participating in it in marginalized ways that are often detrimental to their interests. (Khor, 2001:19).

These are the objective consequences of Africa's participation in the new globalization game. The consequences sharply stand against the deceitful optimism of hyper globalizers and liberalists who supposed that Africa (under these conditions) has anything to gain from this oppressive world order. Despite the seeming near-consensus on the globalization agenda, the untiring persuasion of its "uneven thesis" does not give a place for comfort as it is unbearably costly to the poor countries of the South, nay African countries. This is more so as globalization effects developmental thinking and action of developing nations; sacrifice ethical equity and social concerns on the altars of market considerations and reduces the sovereign state's autonomy. Ohiorhenuan (1998) agrees with this when he stated that it challenges the meditative role of the state vis-a-vis foreign pressures. It poses threat to the exercise of discretion by the state everywhere. This made globalization an awesome and terrifying phenomenon for Sub-Saharan Africa. It is rather by design than by accident that poverty has become a persisting institution in Africa in spite of the continent's rich natural resources.

Indeed the developing countries external debt overhang has reached two trillion dollars (Akindele (2000) cited World Bank 1994). This has exacerbated mass poverty and the related multi-faceted depravity of the citizenry of all requisite essence of meaningful living. Again this has led to lack of government's incentives to encourage local production, subversion of local products through massive importation, currency devaluation; depletion of foreign reserves etc. This no doubt raises the problem of marginalization which Ake (1996) described rightly as, the dynamics of underdevelopment by the agents of development.

Furthermore, globalization's ideology of free market liberalism and poverty-based democracy remains a continuous tool for cultural imperialism and. the institutionalization of both economic and political exploitation and domination of African economies through their local comprador elements (Tandon 1998A). Otokhine, (2002:2) added that if the trend continues, “A sort of cultural imperialism which will seek to enslave the African mind, leaving in its wake a cultureless disoriented people (may become a permanent feature of Africa and or people (emphasis mine)".

From the foregoing, globalization is nothing more than a form of entrapment for Africa. And until Africa understand its one arm banditry, concretely discern and checkmate it, globalization will lead Africa to increase poverty. This will be better understood if we consider the heavy burden of foreign debt which has greatly diminished their ability to be in charge of their affairs and respond to the needs of the citizenry. This is at the root of the legitimacy crisis faced by most African governments that has turned the entire African continent into an empire of confusion and chaos.

Conclusion and Recommendations

I have argued exhaustively in this study that Africa is the major victim of globalization which I exposed as a master of disaster that is responsible for Africa's persisting poverty and underdevelopment. That Africa has become the victim of globalization should not be a surprise to anyone because, the structural imbalance-major feature of Africa's relations with the West, a debt overhang, failed infrastructure, made possible by official corruption, the unhealthy market policies of the Breton Woods institutions, its position in the "digital divide", non-conducive investment environment, lack of economic integration, technological backwardness and lack of innovation etc, are not as it were, good kits of the globalization game. Resultantly, Africa has been methodologically programmed to lose out once again in the globalization game.

The question now is: what should be done to help heal this "patient" of globalization. In spite of the evident inherent imperfections, fighting globalization or delinking from it may not be sensible or realizable. The way forward should therefore be sought in a technology driven economy, and contrary to what the market fundamentalist may posit, African governments should commit enormous resources into social and physical infrastructure that will promote investment, diversify export and encourage genuine economic integration in the Africa continent. This will not only increase the volume of trade in Africa but will also confer them leverage in trade negotiation. To achieve these, African governments will first of all use their sovereignty to capture the economic rents of the natural resource export economy from the foreign transnational corporations and invest it in other sectors. This will bring a forward and backward linkage effect to the economy and allow for diversification which will boost industrial output and industrial capital.

In addition to the above, there should be a "philosophy or orientation of development". This is a necessary condition for resource bearing states of Africa to connect with development. A philosophy or orientation of development involves the general framework of knowledge that is available in our states for the understanding of sectoral production and psycho-economic maneuvers of the international trade environment. It serves as a think-tank that will direct the course of development; even investors have to draw from it.

The only problem is in whether African leaders do have the political will and patriotism to take these radical measures to pull Africa out of this pathetic situation, in spite of the existence of local comprador elements who share class interests with foreign transnational corporation. Only the future can tell.

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