

Globalization and the Future of West African Development: Issues, Challenges, Prospects and options

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Abstract: Since the beginning of modern globalization, the question of West African development has not been resolved, as post independence race for modernization and development persist among developing countries, some of the developing countries were able to record remarkable successes in terms of development with the exception of West African sub-region which finds it difficult to take advantage of globalization for its development as other part of the world did. Globalization is said to have transformed West African economy into an import oriented economy, which forced West African States into an economic role where they export raw materials in exchange for finished goods. This process could not give the region the tentacles to compete with the rest of the world in development; the region as a result is characterized by social vices, poverty, cultural confusion, political instability, social instability, among other impediments to development. The paper traces the antecedents of West Africa's quest for development in the light of trending globalization, the paper adopted the dependency theory as a framework for the analysis, the paper calls on the need for West African countries to manage its relations with the rest of the world through protectionism of indigenous industries, domestic values and cultures as a promising strategy to overcome the threats of globalization to the region.

Key words: Globalization, Underdevelopment, Economy, Culture, Prospects

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I. INTRODUCTION

The 21st Century is an era of globalization characterized by an unprecedented worldwide global interconnectedness which are eroding and fragmenting nation state. The world wide global connectivity has forced state to give up their sovereignty to supra national institutions, this has led to the evolution of notions such as borderless world and global village. No matter the Autocratic nature of state, no matter its dictatorial leadership, no matter its national and foreign policy, no state can afford to pursue an isolationist policy isolating itself from the global array of connectivity. Since the end of the Second World War in 1945, the universe has seen some important new developments, with the development of digital media, satellites, telecommunication, social media and integration of global economy, policy makers had had to cope with extremely difficult and dangerous problems, which are not unconnected to the incompatibility of globalization with their national development agenda. No doubt globalization has expanded opportunities as regards to investment, transfer of capital, foreign aid and transfer of technology but the region in question (West Africa) has little or no profit from the process as the process forced us to play an economic role of exporting raw materials and importing finished goods in return and the resultant implication of it is disastrous to our political economy as will be discussed in details in the paper.

Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

A theory is a framework for analysis, political scientist develop theories/frameworks both to understand the causes of events that occurs in the international system and to answer the fundamental questions in our field. In an attempt to understand West Africa's underdevelopment, the study adopted the dependency theory as a guide for the analysis. Whereas classical theory attributes the causes of most developing countries' underdevelopment to internal conditions within states, dependency theory emphasizes international factors in general and the Global South's dependence on the dominant great powers in particular. Dependency theory was built on Vladimir Lenin's radical critique of imperialism, but it goes beyond it to account for changes that have occurred in recent decades. Its central proposition is that the structure of the capitalist world economy is based on a division of labor between a dominant core and a subordinate periphery. As a result of colonialism, the

Global South countries that make up the periphery have been forced into an economic role whereby they export raw materials and import finished goods.

Dependency theorists maintain that global inequalities cannot be reduced so long as developing Countries continue to specialize in producing primary products for which there are often numerous competing suppliers and limited demand. Breaking out of their dependent status and pursuing their own industrial development remains the greatest foreign policy priority for countries in the Global South. To this end, some countries (particularly those in Latin America) have pursued development through an import-substitution industrialization strategy designed to encourage domestic entrepreneurs to manufacture products traditionally imported from abroad. Governments (often dictatorships) became heavily involved in managing their economies and, in some cases, became the owners and operators of industry.

Import-substitution industrialization eventually fell from favor, in fact because manufacturers often found that they still had to rely on Global North technology to produce goods for their domestic markets. The preference now is for *export-led industrialization*, based on the realization that “what had enriched the rich was not their insulation from imports (rich countries do, in fact, import all sorts of goods) but their success in manufactured exports, where higher prices could be commanded than for [Global South] raw materials”.

Dependency theorists also argue that countries in the Global South are vulnerable to cultural penetration by multinational corporations (MNCs) and other outside forces, which saturate them with values alien to their societies. Once such penetration has occurred, the inherently unequal exchanges that bind the exploiters and the exploited are sustained by elites within the Penetrated societies, who sacrifice their country’s welfare for personal gain. The argument that a privileged few benefit from dependency at the expense of their societies underscores the dual nature of many developing countries. Dualism refers to the existence of two separate economic and social sectors operating side by side. Dual societies typically have a rural, impoverished, and neglected sector operating alongside an urban, developing, or advanced sector but with little interaction between the two.

MNCs contribute to dualism by favoring a minority of well-compensated employees over the rest that increases gaps in pay and by widening differences between rural and urban economic opportunities.

Meaning of Globalization

The term globalization often refers to as Americanization, Universalization, Westernization or liberalization simply means a more connected world, it is the integration of global societies into a single global village with a common economic, social and political system.

Giddens, (1997) defined globalization as the intensification of world-wide social relations, which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice-versa. Abdurrahman and Kura (2013) conceptualized globalization as a complex phenomenon that underlines a multiplicity of linkages and interconnectedness surpassing the nation-state. It is a process that brings various agents, issues, events, actions, into a complex web of relationships and interactions

Ritzer (2008) defined globalization as the spread of worldwide practices, relations, consciousness and organization of social life.

The word is often used to describe the growing interdependencies of the world’s economies, culture, and population brought about by Cross-border trade in goods and services, technology, and flow of investment, people and information. The concept can also be used to refer to a process of interaction and integration of various global communities in all aspects; it is the free movement of goods, services and people across the world.

Globalization in West Africa

Since the beginning of the 19th century modern globalization has been a vehicle for the transportations of goods and culture across the world, globalization is thus a process that connects different parts of the world economically, politically and culturally leading to a complex array of interdependence of different parts of the world. West African experience with the process can be analyzed in three major distinctive dimensions as follows:

Economic Dimension

West African experience with globalization economically can be traced as far back as the 15th century age of European exploration; this was the period when European sailors sailed across different parts of the world in search of spices, ornaments and gold to feed their economies. The beginning of West African experience in this regard was when the region had its first contact with the Portuguese, it was this contact that later ensured in the beginning of trade relations between West African kingdoms and empires and the European explorers where West African Kingdoms sell raw materials and food crops in exchange for European goods. This trade later

culminated in the beginning of Trans Atlantic slave trade with the Europeans and most of all total scramble and partitioning of the region by the Imperial powers.

Following the post independence era, with the 20th century political and market liberalism and the revolution in information communication technology industry economic globalization in West Africa took a radical dimension ushering in an era of foreign aids and foreign direct investment into the region, the formation of a regional economic bloc comprising of all west African states in the name of ECOWAS, rapid increase in cross border relations inform of import and exports, market integration, technology transfer into the region. All these important developments naturally set a new phase of economic globalization in the region.

Today the region has been drawn into an economically integrated world driven by a world class technological advancement led by e-commerce, e-banking, e-marketing among others, 21st century economic globalization is so vague that with a punch of a computer one could easily make a multimillion dollar transaction; economic globalization is therefore integrating West African States with the rest of the world, leading to a borderless world where transfer of goods and services are done without any hindrance.

Economic globalization has to do with increased economic interdependence and integration of all national economies into one global economy. Abdurrahman and Kura (2013) noted in this regard that globalization has two important dimensions: the first is concerned with economic aspects, which comprises trade, investment, technology, cross border production systems, information flows and communication; and the second deals with increased harmonization of policies and institutions in the international system on trade and capital market liberalization, standardization of policies and so on.

Socio-Cultural Dimension

This dwells on the social and cultural integration of global societies, the world is experiencing an unprecedented integration of culture to the extent that historians and critics of globalization refer to the 21st century cultural integration as an age of westernization. Globalization is thus a critical tool for cultural homogeneity and end to cultural diversity in the world, the cultural and linguistic differences accompanying ethnic divisions in Africa have been weakened by the forces of globalization. Africans traditional cultural values are being replaced by the global cultural values. Scott and Marshall (2005) argue that global culture is brought about by varieties of social and cultural developments which include the existence of world satellite information system, the emergence of global patterns of consumption and consumerism. the cultivation of cosmopolitan life-styles, the emergence of global sport such as the Olympic games, the spread of world tourism, the decline of the sovereignty of the nation state, the growth of global military system, recognition of a world-wide ecological crisis, the Development of world-wide health problems such as HIV/Aids. Perhaps one can say nearly every nation and the lives of billions of people throughout the world are being transformed, often quite dramatically, by globalization. The degree and significance of its impact can be seen almost everywhere.

Political Dimension

What we describe today as West Africa does not exist as one entity during the pre-colonial days. The various communities which make up West Africa today were developing in their own ways before the colonial factors intervene. Indeed, what existed then were various types of state organizations at various stages of development. These included empires, kingdoms, clans/villages, organizations among others. Such communities have already had their developmental process socially, economically, politically and medically but retarded by the European imperialism, which has manifested itself now in the form of political globalization.

Those that adopt political approach tend to emphasize the near importance of the state in the era of globalization. According to Ugwukah and Michael, (2010) the tread of globalization in its dynamics, in the integration of capital, goods and services is likely to undermine not only the sovereignty of states, but also make it less important in the conduct of foreign relations the universalization of western form of democracy has increasingly become the final form of government across the globe. This can also be demonstrated in series of protests demanding for democratic government against military regimes in the region.

In addition and related to the above, is that the rise in importance of such transnational bodies as World Bank, IMF, UN and AU, ECOWAS introduces new agents into decision making process of which the nation-states have to negotiate and contend with. Thus, the incursions of international organizations upon national sovereignty are restricting the ability of the state to uphold its own fundamental values which of course is the situation in West Africa.

Globalization and Questions in West Africa's Development

Despite this bright prospects of development in West Africa in this contemporary age of socio-political and economic globalization a fatal fissure quickly spanned out of the new institutionalism as the region has not yet being able to ascertain its developmental goals at a time when the race for modernization and development is

the order of the day, as such therefore the question of why West Africa is lagging behind in terms of development is going to be the central focus of this segment of the paper.

Economically, the growing global economy which was fastened mostly by international trade has no doubt created a dual phenomenon where regions continued to experience economic development at the expense of the others. As a result of colonial legacies African countries could not have the man power and technological development to take advantage of globalized trade; hence the region's economy did not change even after independence as the region continued to be a producer of primary products and importer of finished goods, this system of in balance trade by implication made the region a home of poverty to the extent that some of the countries in the region are among the poorest in the world. Because of the economic situation in the region, the region could not have control over the agents of globalization (media, ICT, telegram, telecommunication, internet, multinational cooperation's, international financial regulatory agencies, among others). Thus the region is not a seller (profiting) but an end user of globalization and the implication of this is the region continue to boost the economy of the developed world while letting home in absolute poverty. Again the disparity evident between the rich and poor countries in terms of development demonstrates that globalization is in favor of the capitalist imperialist world and not the developing world that has little goods and services to offer in the system.

There is no doubt that globalization has "created a vast chasm between the North and the South" (Tandon 1998). This is particularly identifiable from the UNDP's Human Development Report of 1996 contains the fact that: "the gap in per capital income between the industrial and developing worlds tripled from \$5,700 in 1960 to \$15,400 in 1993 (UNDP, 1996:2)."

Globalization has, on the whole, reinforced the economic marginalization of African economies and their dependence on a few primary goods for which demand and prices are externally determined. This has, in turn, accentuated poverty and economic inequality as well as the ability of the vast number of Africans to participate meaningfully in the social and political life of their countries. Economic and social stagnation has also triggered a substantial brain- drain from Africa, further weakening the ability of African countries to manage their economies efficiently and effectively.

Finally, while the scientific and technological forces unleashed by globalization have facilitated to some extent access by Africans to advanced technology and information, this has been at the expense of stultifying the indigenous development of technology and distorting patterns of production in Africa, notably by utilizing capital as against labor intensive methods of production, which in turn increases unemployment and poverty.

Socio-Cultural

As a result of the cultural domination from outside that goes with globalization, African countries are rapidly losing their cultural identity and therefore their ability to interact with other cultures on an equal and autonomous basis, borrowing from other cultures only those aspects that meet its requirements and needs.

Globalization is therefore the biggest threat to African indigenous cultures and value system, the adoption of foreign languages as official languages, the adoption of western system of justice, the adoption of western value system, the adoption of

Western morals

Over-reliance on western education as a result of colonialism has created a distorted value system. The colonial initiated education –as prestige economy gained support by wider society. State approved farming schemes gave way to cash crops as opposed to traditional food farming at the expense of local food security. Farming activity became menial and was reserved for the largely uneducated and the unskilled nationals. English language fluency was mistaken for intelligence. Among other examples, government accountability to its citizenry did not matter if it enjoyed international recognition (goodwill) by maintaining the colonial status quo. Formal education became a passport for gaining prestige, hence competition for places in higher education translated into competition for prestige. As a result, the importance of human development function was overlooked. The case for local languages, the most efficient medium of education, became outmoded because of displacement. Literacy as a human development tool was made subordinate to literacy for prestige; (Paa Kwasi, 2005).

These encouraged nearly all forms of language policy in Sub-Saharan Africa that is communicating with the international community. The international community for each country most notably consisted of the former colonial powers and other countries which spoke the same language as the respective colonial power. Human development then became valuable only when it was acquired in the colonial power's language and ability became only valuable to "the national development effort" if acquired in the colonial masters language e.g. English, French etc. Consequently, educational qualification in an African language became less value than qualification in the colonial language because of the influence the imperial countries exerted over Africa as a result of their science supported civilizations. According to Prah (1995) and Paa Kwasi (2005) the advent of

colonialism gradually eroded the place of African languages in African economies by granting the highest prestige value to school-education in colonial languages.

The decline of political colonialism further entrenched the valuation of colonial languages above African languages. The colonial powers handed the reins of power to their western educated protégés instead of the pre-colonial traditional elites in all newly independent Africa. This means the perpetuation of the colonial language policy of using no African language at highest level of government (African education commission 1924). Politically, Globalization reduces the autonomy of the independence states. According to Ohiorhenuan (), it challenges the meditative role of the state vis-à-vis external pressures. It threatens the discretion of the state everywhere. Not only this, according to Tandon (1998), globalisation encourages “decreasing National control and increasing control over the (Internal) economy (of the state) by outside players.” In fact, the gospel of globalisation through its economic liberalism “has been elevated to the position of absolute truth, a sort of pence unique (or single theory) against which there is no credible alternative” (AAPS, 1995: 3). Indeed, globalisation is an awesome and terrifying phenomenon for African countries.

The planetary phenomenon of globalization is nothing but a new order of marginalization of the African continent. Its universalization of communication, mass production, market exchanges and redistribution, rather than engendering new ideas and developmental orientation in Africa, subverts its autonomy and powers of self-determination. It is rather by design than by accident that poverty has become a major institution in Africa despite this continent’s stupendous resources.

+Nation-states in Africa today, rarely define the rules and regulations of their economy, production, credits and exchanges of goods and services due to the rampaging menace of globalization. They are hardly now capable of volitionally managing their political, economic and socio-cultural development. Globalization has imposed heavy constraints on the internal management dynamics of most if not all the polities in Africa (e.g., Nigeria) where the government now finds it difficult in most cases to meet the genuine demands of the governed on many issues of national urgency (e.g., the June 1st, 2000, 50% hike in the prices of petroleum and related products and its attendant crippling national strike by the Nigerian workers).

The result of globalization in Africa is basically a competition between the palatial centers (Developed World) and the slums (Africa) of the village where a preponderant majority of the people daily sink deeper into poverty and misery.

Consequently, its (globalization) ideology of “free-market liberalism and property-based democracy remains a continuous license for cultural imperialism and, the institutionalization of both political and economic domination and exploitation of the weaker partners (i.e. the developing economies) through their internal agents (Tandon 1998A: 2).

Generally, globalization has become a “threat to the poor rather than an opportunity for global action to eradicate poverty” (Obadina 1998:32). Arguing further, Obadina contends that the “concept of absolute freedom that underlies the rationale for globalization is the same notion” used to justify slavery and colonization. It is equally anchored on the “belief that the strong, however defined, should be free to exercise their strength without moral or legal limitations that protect the weak”. Thus, it is distinct from positive freedom which states that:

People should be free as long as they do not deny the rights and freedom of others. People should not be at liberty to deny others freedom and basic rights. There must be limits on freedom otherwise the liberty of the powerful becomes the oppression of the weak (Obadina 1999: 32).

Africa governments (now) seem to have lost control of the policy making process, and are under pressure to accept dictation from creditor nations and financial institutions. (African) governments now tend to discuss development issues less with their own nationals, and more with donors and creditors, about debt repayment, debt relief and rescheduling, and paradoxically about more development assistance (which rather than develop them further their underdevelopment and dependent (emphasis mine) (Nwaka, 2000:31).

Prospects and Options for West African Development

The forgoing analysis suggests that the negative consequences of globalization on West Africa far out way their positive impact. To reverse this situation, Africa must work hard to address the aforementioned problem by adopting the under listed strategies.

Firstly, there is a need to terminate imperialism by rejecting dependence on foreign aid, foreign goods and foreign direct investment West Africa need to develop from within. This will make our development internal. Baah, in his analysis of the history of development, highlights some initiatives in Africa and considered the ones made from within and not from without as the most effective and beneficial to human development in Africa. According to him, country owned initiatives designed and implemented by African countries rather than the ones designed for Africa have yielded more developmental goals. He argues that Africa should not continue to deceive itself. Rather, Africa should take her destiny into her own hands and develop her own policies based

on the needs of her people. West Africa's future in global market lies in her own ability to take bold development initiatives. Africa's future does not lie in spurious and Neo-colonial partnerships. Africa needs to develop in its own interest, which is crucial here. This is a type of development that considers not just mere growth, but the emancipation of the people.

This again is where the human development indices are relevant and meaningful.

To introduce far-reaching changes in the assumptions, values and objectives of the existing states, so as to transform them into truly developmental states that are strong without being authoritarian, More Significantly, West African nations must reject cultural imperialism through the promotion of their own value systems and reject some of the ideals of western liberalism advocated by modern globalization. The region should however encourage its nationals to propagate for their culture, culture in form of mode of dressing, local languages, traditional songs, traditional ceremonies, local dramas', local foods, traditional tales among others. No doubt directly or indirectly the aforementioned traditions has a strong link to the economic development of African states and reviving those systems will in turn provide jobs to millions of Africans working in various cultural industries such as blacksmithing, weaving, dying, artifacts, designing, poetry, drama, music among others whose jobs are under the threat of cultural imperialism. In the same no vein, nation has ever prosper when it neglect its cultural values as such therefore West African countries must reject the gospel of cultural imperialism in the name of globalization.

Beside the negative consequences of cultural imperialism on West Africa's economic development, the process has destabilized African region, as tradition some of the values propagated by the gospel of liberalism have no bases in the African tradition, values like same sex marriage, adultery, child liberty from parents care, alcoholism, among others went far to even contradict the religious beliefs in most of the African societies. This contradiction has led to so many uprising and violent resistant in the region. Therefore to archive social stability African countries most holistically condemn these anti moral values, through the adoption of a cultural protectionist policy aimed at protecting the integrity of African cultures.

Secondly, there is an urgent need is to diversify African economies away from dependence on a few primary commodities, especially depleting natural resources which constitute enclaves in the overall economy, ensure a balance between agriculture and manufacturing, and increase the competitiveness of African goods in the world market. The achievement of these goals would require energetic and concerted action by governments, civil society, other stakeholders, and society at large, with active and sustained support from the international community. No doubt, Africa do not have the techno how and capacity to compete with the rest of the world so therefore African countries need to work hard to invest much in research and development, establish domestic industries and protect these industries through export promotion and import restriction strategies. African countries should restructure their economy in such a way that the region attains a specialization in the production of a particular commodity, by so doing dictating its prices rather than having its dictated. This will help the region escape the circle of imperialism by neo colonial powers.

Thirdly, the issue of National Identity and patriotism, which is a subject for further research, is also crucial. There is no doubt that the destruction of our economic and political structures due to colonialism and modernization has destroyed our culture. There is a loss of cultural, national, political and collective identity. However modernization needs not necessarily mean obliteration of all elements of traditional culture. Modern African identity does not have to reject aspects of traditional culture which are useful, but it can take note of the good aspects and do a critical and reconstructive self-evaluation. In this sense whatever evolves will not be out of cultural traditionalism but will be an authentic identity based on a conscious and deliberate effort and is a reflection of both the new and old ideals of life.

Summary

II. CONCLUSION

Finally, It is apparent that, the globalization process is more symmetrical to the "origin and development of the neo-colonial states (in Africa)" which were "determined by the nature and structures of the colonizing countries" (Akindele, 1990, Adebo and Akindele, 1990) rather than according to a concretely established philosophy or determination to get Africa out of lingering crises. Thus, globalization is a form of entrapment for Africa. Apart from its evocation of powerlessness already analyzed, it creates a process through which the "poor countries (in Africa) are dominated and exploited by the rich countries (Wohlcke, 1993; 56) and, a vicious circle of vulnerability of African governments" to outside parasitic economic maneuvering as does the lack of capacity for independence of socio-political, cultural and psychological thinking relative to concrete actions (see Barrett and Carter, 2000). Unless, as earlier stated, its one-arm banditry is understood, concretely discerned and checkmated, globalization will lead Africa to "increased penury". This can be better understood in the context of the fact that, the "heavy burden of foreign debt has greatly eroded their capacity to run their own affairs and respond to the demands of the people" (SAPEM, 1996: 2). This unwholesome development has created a legitimacy crisis for most African governments and turned the African continent into an Empire of Chaos.

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