

Globalization and its Forces: An Assessment

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ABSTRACT

The focus of the paper is to assess globalization and its forces, significantly, societal perception of these forces as they affect globalization. To do this, the paper is divided into sections. Section one is introduction. Section two is ideological positions on globalization. Section three is forces of globalization such as; technology, economic liberalization and democracy. Section four is the enforcers of democracy. Section five is other side of globalization. Section six is the conclusion. It is agreed that, globalization is a wonderful opportunity to unite in terms of interest in order to best benefit from the material and cultural resources of the World.

Keywords: globalization, politics, economy, social, diversification

INTRODUCTION

The concept of globalization as it is so popular with the Western media has been encountering much opposition from a variety of groups and interests throughout the world. There remain many unanswered questions as to effects of this phenomenon especially to the developing nations of Asia, Latin America, and Africa. Preoccupation with the political, economic and social effects of globalization was a major theme of the 1999 general debate in the UN General Assembly. The demonstration in Seattle against the WTO was partly an expression of this mood. Similarly, the strike by students of the Autonomous National University in Mexico in 2000 is all in protest against the global economy and free trade. In some places, people are beginning to see the global economy as the new enemy-faceless, ruthless enormously powerful, not accountable, and non-transparent.

This paper attempted to examine what globalization is all about-the ideological position on the concept, the forces and enforcers of the phenomenon and the other side of it especially as it affects the developing world.

GLOBALIZATON

According to the address of the former Nigerian Foreign Affairs Ministers Alhaji Sule Lamido presented in the Millennium Assembly, 'the Globe' which is the symbol or logo of the United Nation depicts humanity' (The Punch; 2000). From the word 'globe' has been derived the phenomenon called globalization, which explicitly connotes a world without (national) borders with particular reference to commerce. The word globalization is not entirely new in the Lexicon of political economics discussed. In fact many writers on political economics argue that globalization in economic terms is as old as when the Capitalist economic system appeared in the world. According to the renowned Egyptian political economist Samir Amin, it is as ancient as the landing of Christopher Columbus in America in 1492. However, the currency of this phenomenon as a late 20th century and 21st century usage can be first traced to the article of Theodore Levitt in the Harvard Business Review entitled the "Globalization of Markets"

Levitts basic premises were that companies must learn to operate as if the world were one large market ignoring superficial regional and national differences. Those advices of Levitt have since moved in to the domain of economics by the share dictate of the need of the present level of development of international capital and finance. Today, there is such tremendous inter-penetration of capital and technological capital that it is difficult to define the nationality of a given product. The personal computer is an example of such product. Its parts come from different countries of Europe, Asia and America. Also, through mergers, acquisitions and tradeoffs the companies that are controlling world commerce today have outgrown individual nations; they are no longer Multinationals but Transnational. Globalization was heralded by the revolution in satellite cable business, voice data and the computer technology. The new communication technologies in terms of its structure, process, operation, distribution and output have made the world more inter-dependent than ever before. The international media have transcended the boundaries of nations.

In the days of old, different market forms were developed to move trade and investment into an institution for trade in values and sourcing for investment money, the stock exchange was it. Enterprises that were to be sold had their worth valued as shares to be traded on the floor of the stock exchange. However, nothing close to the hitherto economic utopia of the perfect market

has so far been invented like the Internet. The Internet is the single largest market that allows all buyers and sellers to meet together with full information about supply and demand; it has no entry and exit barriers. It matches every buyer with supplies that would best meet his needs. Prices are competitive and are at the level that would keep supply and demand at equilibrium. There is no transaction cost such as time wasted in seeking the right product. These are the strength of the internet. The volume of trade on the Internet is massive as a lot of transnational corporations are moving almost all their purchases and supplies on the Internet. Globalization as a social and historical phenomenon encompasses virtually all spheres of human and social endeavor-intellectual, cultural, scientific, social, economic, political e.t.c. The reality, no doubt, is that it imposes greater challenges on vulnerable economics of third-world countries, hence, different ideological positions on the concept.

IDEOLOGICAL POSITIONS ON GLOBALIZATION

As we have already noted earlier, globalization is a complex, unwieldy, pervasive and very diffusely used concept. Therefore one cannot define it in definite terms. However, the ideological positions on globalization as a concept can be categorized into two broad headings-The liberal perspective and the Marxists-imperialist perspective. Liberalization is the ideology of the industrialized North (West), which emerged as a developed political creed in the early 19th century (Heywood; 1997). To the liberals, the emergence of global economy promotes international harmony and material inequality through free market. The liberals believe in international co-operation on global economic matters, and are always emphasizing on the advantages of free trade and economic inter-dependence.

To them globalization is seen as a process which involves growing economic interdependence of countries worldwide' (Kavaljit; 1999), a complex web of inter-connectedness. Globalization in this respect means "a process whereby economic, political and socio cultural transactions are less and less constrained by national boundaries and the sovereign authority of national governments", (Bruze; 1999). It involves declining significance of international borders for the flow of goods, capital, (especially finance capital), people and ideas, It is a rapid integration of worldwide trade, financial flows, technological spill avers, information networks and cross cultural currents (Angela; 2003).To the liberals, globalization is synonymous with and exclusively about a totally

free unregulated world market, which is absolutely tied to total deregulation within countries and between countries (The Guardian; 2001).

Globalization can also be referred to as explosive growth of huge multinational corporations and vast pool of capital that have crossed national borders and penetrates everywhere (Tanzer; 1995). Accordingly one of the most important agents of globalization is the MNC or TNC which itself is a liberal apparatus of economic development. The TNC, are peddlers of international finance capital and technology which we shall have time to discuss in this paper as main forces of globalization. In general terms these groups of people believe that globalization is an antidote to economic, political, social and cultural problems of the world.

On the other side of globalization as a concept is the Marxist imperialist's perspective. The Marxists stress on economic power and the role-played by international capital. However the implication of viewing capitalism as an international system cannot be fully explored without imperialism, since imperial expansion is a reflection of domestic capitalist quest to maintain dominance and profit. To this group globalization means "subordination" to the market power of multinationals (Transnational) which serves the class interest of international capital. This indeed has made the developing countries vulnerable to globalization (bad) effects. For this group also, globalization is not a condition or a phenomenon. It is rather a process that has been going on for a long time ever since capitalism came into the world as a viable form of society four or five centuries ago (Tanzer; 1995) . Globalization is rapid expansion of capitalism, capitalist-economic relations and the capitalist market across the globe particularly to areas where they had hitherto been absent, marginal or weak.

The process is characterized and promoted by a rapid development of technology in transportation, telecommunication, and massive movement of human beings, goods services and information across countries. Globalization according to this group is just like capitalism and colonization, which emphasizes and enhances great prosperity for the few and continued inequality and poverty for the many as the gap between the rich and the poor seem doomed to increase faster (Uruquhart; 2000). This group sees Globalization as underdevelopment tool of the North especially the western world to perpetuate the dominance and subservience of the third world continents of Africa, Latin America and sonic Asian countries.

FORCES OF GLOBALIZATION

One cannot be talking about globalization in a vacuum. What are we globalizing? To what effect is globalization? Globalization, for all intents and purposes touches on every aspect of human life. However for the purpose of this paper we shall look at the 3 main forces of globalization namely - Technology, economic liberalization and Democratic governance.

Technology

Globalization can be seen in purely technological terms, especially the new communication technology and the information revolution. These are innovations, which, of course, do not simply remain at the level of communication in the narrow sense, but also have their impact on industrial production and organization and on the marketing of goods. The revolution in computer technology has brought about high improvements in all aspects of human endeavor. In pure scientific research, in the social sciences particularly in managerial decisions, the use of computers have become quite common place. Informational technology (IT) has developed into combinations of computer and telecommunication technologies to transmit information, receive instructions and transact business and has greatly enhanced efficiency in service delivery. The high point of (IT) revolution is the interconnectivity (networks) of computers, which has given rise to the networks, the largest reservoirs of all types of information in the world and the greatest wonder of the century-the Internet. The internet has its origin in the United States of America under the experimented Wide Area Network (WAN) project of the Advance Research Project Administration Networks (ARPANET) (Usman; un). An important aspect of the Internet network is the electronic mail (E-mail), the fastest, cheapest and commonest means by which messages are sent through computer networks across the globe.

Also information technology has thrown up a lot of challenges for individual economies and in particular financial systems by shrinking the world further into a global village and providing a reservoir of information through a wide range of interconnectivity. With this, business transactions can be carried out notwithstanding the distance. According to Shamsuddeen Usman, what we are witnessing today is a realization of Marshall McLuhan's prediction in the 1960's that "electronic interdependence will create the world in the image of a global village (Usman; un).

Economic Liberalization

Another aspect of globalization is the economic aspect, which in fact constantly seems to be dissolving into all the rest-technological, political, cultural and social aspects of globalization. The development of computer technology especially the Information Technology (IT) has led to huge expansion of finance capital markets and as well aided economic liberalization of world market. In the same vein, Information technology has made protectionism and regulations by nation states irrelevant and difficult task too, paving way for open international trade and capital flows, internationalization of finance capital through Transnational Banks, destruction of trade barriers etc. The central point here is that not only does the superiority of the free market system seem to have been widely recognized and globally adopted, but that the Western - style capitalist system seems to have triumphed not only over its erstwhile socialist contenders but also over its Asian counterpart which is built upon different social and cultural values. A cursory look at the unprecedented financial turmoil, that has engulfed Asia since 1997 (Usman;un).Leading to emergency and financial market devaluations , credit squeeze rising interest rates collapse of many financial and corporate institution and a consequent dramatic growth will attest to globalization of economic liberalization.

Democracy

Democracy and its associated concepts and institutions such as Separation of Powers, strong policing and judicial systems, a free press, transparency, accountability, responsibility, patriotism etc are becoming globally accepted even though with different variants. Democracy has become widely accepted globally as the form of governance through which the wishes and aspirations of the majority of the populace are best realized. This is buttressed by the failure of many of the erstwhile military and civilian dictatorships throughout the world and the collapse of the communist system that allowed a small clique of bureaucrats to usurp the almost supreme power of knowing and deciding what was good for everybody else in the economy(Olawepo; 2000). That Democracy has become a global force is also attested to by the way in which any other non-democratic systems are being rejected and isolated internationally despite the wide diversity in democratic forms and institutions around the globe. Democracy has become such a globally accepted phenomenon today that it is being made prerequisite for so many critical things which may include:

- ✚ Acceptance of countries into many respectable international institutions;
- ✚ Endorsement of country's economic programmes by the IMF, World Bank and other International Financial Institutions.
- ✚ Granting of aid and technical assistance by other countries and bilateral or multinational agencies;
- ✚ Trading with countries (Olawepo; 2000).

ENFORCERS OF GLOBALIZATION

It is not the communication transnational corporation alone that is facilitators of globalization. The different Breton woods institutions such as the World Bank, IMF and International Financial Institutions have long incorporated the requirements of the New Economic Order (expressed in globalization) to their conditions in their dealings with different countries of the World particularly the debt-ridden economics of Africa, Latin America, and Asia. The World Trade Organization (WTO) that emerges as successor to the General Agreement of Trade and Tariff (GATT) also appeared on the world scene as one of the global enforcers of the phenomenon under examination. The WTO like the Breton Wood Institutions is always interested in such things as will facilitates greater inter-penetration of capital, International competition and trade, hence it concerns such issues as slashing tariffs to allow for international competition and trade - bringing services and agriculture under multilateral trade rules and free trade. However, the new globalized economy require some condition by all countries of the world intended on taking advantage of this phenomenon.

These include:

- ✚ Privatization of economies.
- ✚ Opening of domestic markets as concessions.
- ✚ To have access to foreign markets
- ✚ Removal of state subsidy.
- ✚ Political pluralism.
- ✚ Multi-party election.
- ✚ Free press.
- ✚ Free trade union and
- ✚ The operation of the rule of law and independent of the judiciary (Urquhart; 2000).

OTHERSIDE OF GLOBALIZATION

A number of scholars in developing world, labour activists and antimonopoly groups have argued that while the world might have been brought into a global village; it is a village of unequal parties. They argue too that, the forces of globalization appear to be eroding the political independence of economically weak nations of the developing world and also obliterating their mores and culture. For many, it is like globalization stepped into extinguishes the demand of most countries of Africa, Latin-America and Asia for a New World Economic Order and its communication variant New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO). As captured by Luke Uka Uche — “the global manipulation of the media by the industrialized North to the continued disadvantage of the South, most area of which are still underdeveloped, makes us believe that the North and South are in many World but one voice” (Urquhart; 2000). The one voice is the one the individually rich North has impose through its claim to economic and technological superiority and hegemony. Thus, the New World Order does not seem to guarantee economic rights, self-sufficiency, cultural pluralism, autonomy and sovereignty of the nations of the South.

More so, no one knows the ultimate consequences of globalization any more than they know the consequences of the Industrial Revolution at the beginning of the 19th century. Does the Internet bring people together or does it isolate them? Is consumerism destroying identity and diversity or is it reviving national and ethnic feeling? According to Brian Urquhart one thing is certain, globalization in its present form deepens already serious existing inequalities (Farhaarg; un). It is essential therefore to find ways better to distribute its benefits. Similarly, if globalization is not to have an ultimately destabilizing, even explosive effect, it must be shared worldwide to a much greater extent than at present. This means creating a political and social as well as an economic context for it. This may well require a new arrangement in which the private sector, the great transnational cooperation that are now the main actors and beneficiaries of globalization, and governments in international organization share responsibility for developing the rules and institutions that ensure that globalization will be a global blessing and not a curse.

It is often said that computers, telecommunication, and the Internet are the beginning of a single global nervous system. The trouble is that the vast majority is excluded from this revolutionary change. Ninety percent of the

World's people have no access to computers. More than half never even made or received a telephone call.

CONCLUSION

Globalization is a concept understood by many. For the third World countries, it is a kind of political strategy invented by some industrial nations to exploit the poor developing countries. This is because they observe that its present consequences have been that the rich is becoming richer and the poor is turning poorer. Therefore, the real concept of globalization and the problems associated with this phenomenon must be better understood. According to Farhang Sefidvash, humanity, through the process of evolution has grown from the situation of a single families into tribes, then emerged into city states and nation and now the world has reached the condition of what is known as "global village" where all the nations and the peoples of the world have become highly interdependent. Therefore, the phenomenon of globalization is the result of natural process of evolution and reaching this state of total interdependence has been the destiny of mankind. Globalization is not the invention of anyone or any nation. The problem that many feel about globalization is the abuse by some powerful groups or nations, taking undue advantage of this new reality for their own immediate egoistic benefits. Therefore, the problem of the world is not with globalization but is with not knowing how to live under the new reality. On the contrary, globalization which came about due to the rapid development of systems of communications and transportation may be considered a wonderful opportunity for the peoples of the world to unite and harmonize their interests in order to best benefit from the material and cultural resources of the world.

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