

GAINING THE BENEFITS OF GLOBALIZATION IN A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY

John Ojukwu Nwaji

Abstract

Globalization has traversed the world. The integration of economics world-wide is a historical phenomenon. There is a widening and deepening of international flow of trade, finance and information into a single global market. In this era, transitional democracies of the developing world are at the periphery, and may not possibly play a determining role in the globalization process. Yet, if certain strategies are correctly deployed, such developing economies stand to reap some appreciating benefits. This paper accordingly explores some benefits Nigeria as a transitional democracy of the third world stands to gain if some strategies are deployed.

For many years now, the world has been experiencing dramatic wind of transformations. There seems to be a new kind of agenda for the world. In fact, we hear such terms like “A new world order”. “Global village” and “Globalization.” What do all these terms mean? We intend in this write-up to define or explain these concepts, but with more emphasis on globalization.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the gradual erosion of socialism, western powers represented by U.S.A., Britain, France, Canada, Japan, Germany, Italy and China (G8) have been sitting on top of global affairs dictating specific set of agenda to all the countries of the world. One cannot be surprised then of the former President of the U.S. George Bush when he said in 1991 after the Gulf war that “A new world order is emerging”. What indications do we have now of the twenty-first century?” The global trend of the twenty-first century is marked by technological revolution. When systems of computer and electronic hardware and software are linked to external data bases and communication networks, the user can communicate and transmit data and information to organizations within or across national boundaries whether it is a new world order, a new world agenda or globalization, one thing is clear and that is, the world would be witnessing various changes. These changes will be led by the western powers. It is this new world agenda or order that would ultimately lead to globalization.

Globalization Defined

Globalization is the term used by some people to describe the growing world wide interdependence of people and countries. It is described by Ruperez cited in Obanya (2006) cited in Oduara and Bhola (2006) as a set of processes by which the events, decisions and activities that occur in particular part of the world have significant repercussions on other places, on other individuals and other communities. Abone (2002) sees globalization as the process of creating economic environment that would promote the emergence of a global economy where national boundaries would no longer restrain the flow of commerce. Mitthemman (1995) defined globalization as “the comprehension of the time and space, aspects of social relations, a phenomenon that allows economy, culture and politics of one country to penetrate into another”. Karter and Pittinsky (1996) sees globalization as “a process of change in which the world, countries and their economies are increasingly integrated as a function of rising cross boarder economics and by extension, communication, political and social activities”. These cross boarder exchange includes material transfer of people and things nearly instantaneous communication enabled by emerging information technology. Kanter identifies four broad processes associated with globalization. These are:

- i) **Mobility**-concerns the increasing freedom of movement of people and key business inputs such as capital, labour and ideas.

- ii) **Simultaneity**- This is the increasing extent to which similar goods and services are available in many places around the world at the same time.
- iii) **By-pass**- The increasing degree to which innovators can use alternative channels or routes to reach business or individual consumers around the world. E.g wireless networks such as cellular or satellite bypass formerly dominant land wire system.
- iv) **Pluralism**- This refers to the dispersion of an activity from monopolistic centres where a given economic activity is largely concentrated in geographical areas, to multiple centres of enterprise and influence. In other words, pluralism is concerned with decentralizing economic activities or the spreading of economic activities.

Putting it in a simple way, globalization is to bring the people of the world together through trading, social activities and politics. In other words, globalization refers to the relative liberalization and homogenization of the globe as a result of technological revolutions. The assumption is that the liberalization of national and global markets would enhance the free flow of trade, finance and information which would produce the best outcome for growth and human welfare.

Objectives of Globalization

From what we have said so far, and drawing from literature, we can state the objectives of globalization as follows:

- To bring all the countries of the world to one type of government which is democracy.
- To bring about the existence or respect for human rights in all countries.
- To foster global trade among nations thereby leading to economic liberalization and structural adjustment.
- To change the position of women in all countries by what is popularly known as women empowerment.
- To bring about peace among nations through conflict resolution and peace keeping bodies.
- To provide better health services in all countries in order to reduce death rate around the world.
- To control terrorism.
- To provide revenue for social and cultural integration among nations.
- Improving communication through information technology.

Strategies For Achieving Globalization

1. **Democratization:** For quite some time, there had emerged a centrality and harmony of interest and purpose among western powers towards the globalization of democracy. Because these nations are rich and developed and do provide assistance in various ways to developing nations.

Roberts (1992) said, “the collapse of the Berlin wall in 1989 symbolized the entrance of democratization with western agenda. From 1989 to date, many countries of the world have either democratized or are busy democratizing”. Why is this so? Kanter (1995) stated, “we (western donors) believe that in future competition for donor assistance... those government which are not responding to popular demands for democratization will find themselves in an increasing disadvantageous position”. Without doubt, democratization has been laid down as conditionality if third world countries are to enjoy relationship or get assistance from the Western nations.

Alvin (2001), put it as follows; “in 1990 the then U.S Ambassador to Kenya Mr. Hemstone said that assistance shall only be given to third world countries that nourish democratic institutions including Human Rights”. Kanter (1995), said “indeed former and one time

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president of France Mitterand presented the human right agenda of the west, asserting that observance of human right will hence forth be the supreme prerequisite for aid for every third world country?"

Again, in 1990, the then Canadian Prime Minister declared, Canada shall increasingly be channeling developmental assistance to countries that show respect for Fundamental Human Rights.

- ii) **Women Empowerment:** The desire to justify the equality of women, (with men) as well as their incorporation into nation building and development programmes of their respective nations is an important issue of the new world order. Women empowerment had its origin of course from the Western Powers and non-government organizations. In fact democratization, Fundamental Human Rights and Women Empowerment are inseparable.

The earlier declaration of the equality of women was "the United nations Declarations on the elimination of Discrimination Against Women in 1967". This was followed in 1975 with another declaration titled "The International year of Women". In 1976-1989, we had what is known as the U.N. decade for women" (with triple objectives of Equality, Development and Peace). In 1984 there was African Regional Conference in Amsha Tanzania jointly organized by U.N. in Nairobi Kenya.

There was the U.N. conference on women and development held in Cairo Egypt in 1994 and of course the Beijing Conference in China in 1995. In fact in 1994, gender conditionality became a feature of global importance.

- iii) **Global Trade:** Economically, no country can exist on its own without having some kind of trade with other nations of the world. Even at regional levels we have countries interacting with each other through trading. e.g ECOWAS etc. As pointed out by Balami and Maidugu (1999), "trade globalization takes place because managers initiate decisions that resulted in increased cross boarder flow of goods, services and capital. These developments occur because there is an ever increasing number of countries which are embracing the free market ideology". This free market ideology of course started many years ago. To facilitate this, some measures were put in place. These are:

- The setting up of International Bank for reconstruction and Development (World Bank). This was setup after the second world war in 1944 at Briton Woods (USA). Even though the objective of the World Bank is to provide long term finance for reconstruction and development and to provide technical assistance, it can help in facilitating trade among nations of the world.
 - International Monetary Fund (IMF): Established in 1944 at Briton woods but started operation in 1949. The IMF has the objectives of creating conditions favourable to the expansion of international trade. The existence of the world trade centre in the U.S. and the use of the U.S. dollar as the currency for world exchange are important for global trade.
 - United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTA)- This was created in 1962 with the aim of increasing the share of under-developed countries. At the African end, we have African Development Bank (ADB), which came into existence in 1964 with Abidjan as headquarters. This was created for the purpose of socio-economic integration and mobilization of resources among others.
- iv) **Sports:** We are very much aware that sports have brought the people of almost all nations of the world together. It has led to the integration of various cultures and social activities. We are familiar with existence of the followings:

- The Olympic Games formed with a few countries but today, it has engulfed almost every nation of the world.
- The world cup. This came into existence in 1930 starting with only a few nations. Today, it has become the best world sport with almost all nations participating.

Many other sporting activities are being organized bringing many nations of the world together. Definitely, sports is playing a tremendous role in globalization.

- v) **World Peace Through Conflict Resolution and Peace Keeping:** If development in all nations is to be achieved through democracy, human rights, women emancipation, trade, sports, then there must be peaceful atmosphere existing. This is why one of the objectives of globalization is conflict resolution and peace-keeping.

The establishment of International Court of Justice an arm of the United Nations is another body that has an objective of resolving conflicts and disputes among nations. Yet the degree of suffering brought about by wars on many nations of this world especially Third world countries is a real testimony that global peace is something that must be sought by all nations of the world.

- vi) **Control of Terrorism:** Many countries especially the west and Israel have suffered at the hands of terrorists. It is not surprising then that one of the objectives of the West's new world order is the control of terrorism. The world was shocked on the event of September 11, 2001 at the World Trade Centre in New York, U.S.A. over five thousand (5,000) lives were lost, not to talk of hundred of billions of properties destroyed. The U.S. reacted quickly and swiftly to this, the result of which is the dismantling of the Afghanistan regime that was harbouring the prime suspect Osama Binladen. The fight also led to the dethronement of the Iraq government of Saddam Hussien, that was in support of exportation of terrorism. These do appear to be a worldwide fight against terrorism, a kind of globalization.

- vii) **Provision of Better Health Services:** We have heard this statement far many times e.g "Health for all by the year 2000". Even that this is far from the truth, many attempts have been made to improve the quality of health around the world. This is the reason for the establishment of the World Health Organization (WHO). Today, small pox has been completely eradicated. Vaccine's for the six killer diseases are always in supply. Generally, people of the world have better access to health facilities, of course, we cannot say that all nations of the world are enjoying high level of health, but indeed the objectives of WHO is to provide qualitative health to nations of the world, which of cause is a global intension.

- viii) **Mobility:** For long, the intension of the developed nations particularly the G8 is to globalize the world through various strategies as we have seen. By mobility here, is the freedom of movement of people, goods and services. In other words, it can mean the transportation of people and materials from one place to another by road, water and air which have made it easier for integration.

- ix) **Communication:** This means passing an information from one place to another. For communication to be effective, it must be sent and received at the right time, the right place and by the right person.

For decades we have lived with postal services as means of communication. Then of course the radio and telephone are faster ways of communication. With the improved technology, we have what is known today as BYPASS, one of the processes associated with globalization as identified by Kanter. The BYPASS is a wireless network like the cellular, satellite system and internet. The discovery of computer has provided various ways of using it for faster and

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accurate communications around the world. It has brought the countries of the world very close to each other. It is not surprising then that communications today have been regarded as the real globalization.

Benefits of Globalization in Developing Countries

As pointed out earlier, democratization is a condition laid down by the Western powers for qualifying for assistance for aid. It is true nations that have turned to democracy have obtained such assistance, and such nations have enjoyed foreign investments.

Democracy brings government closer to the people as efforts are being made to represent different sections of the society in government. It is always said that the best military regime is the worst democratic government, so developing countries have made some benefits from democracy. The problem however is that due to the complex nature of many developing countries, and considering the fact that most of the developing countries are experimenting with democracy the benefits derived are yet to make real impacts. As we add corruption, tribalism, poverty, religious fanaticism, we find that objectives of democratization in many developing countries is yet to be achieved.

In the case of human rights, no one can deny the fact that democracy has improved the human rights of many citizens. Today, people can express their views without fear. The detention of people for no real cause have been reduced. In Nigeria we very much remember the suffering of Nigerians under the military regime. Developing countries no doubt have benefited from the strategy of human rights globalization.

The position of women today in developing countries has greatly improved. Women are participating in various offices of responsibility. For example, women are playing key roles in Finance, Education, NAFDAC, EFCC and other exalted political spheres. Developing countries have surely benefited from the agenda of women empowerment. However, the impact is very small considering the population of women in the developing countries.

In the area of global trade, third world countries are not benefiting as they should due to the fact that they cannot compete with the industrialized world. According to Balami and Maidugu (1999). "the increasing globalization of the world economy has put a lot of unfortunate debt burden on the developing countries especially, the Sub-Saharan Africa.

In the area of sports, developing countries have become more and more interested in sports. The impact of Africa especially in football is becoming clear. Many African youths have become professionals and even stars in football and other games. In the issue of conflict resolution and peace keeping one would say that the efforts of U.N. and Regional peacekeeping have at least achieved something Perhaps, countries like Somalia, Bosnia, Burundi, Liberia, Sierra Leone etc could have been in worse conditions if not for the intervening peacekeeping bodies.

As for the issue of provision of good health, one is safe to say that there is improvement in the health care delivery system as compared to what was obtained some ten to fifteen years ago. In the areas of transportation and communication many developing countries have good seaports and air ports. The movement of people, goods and services are therefore easier. In similar vain, the use of the cellular, satellite and internet are on the increase in many developing countries. However, these benefits have not reached a great number of people in most of the developing countries.

The Twenty-First Century and Globalization

The global trends of the twenty first century are marked by technological innovation with its attendant communication revolution. There is the movement from cards to fibre optics, from micro-cards to micro-chips, from mechanical time to aggressive commodity times. When systems of computer and electronic hardware and software are linked to external data bases and communication

networks, the user can communicate and transmit data and information to organizations within or across national boundaries.

The implication of all these, is that these actors in the global system can penetrate the boundaries of the nation-state and make a real mockery of the sovereignty of nations. Paradoxically, technological revolution has undermined the sovereignty of many African States and violated the privacy of individuals and groups.

Programmes are transmitted by various satellite networks every second across national boundaries, affecting or changing the values and cultures of many people. The culture of violence transmitted across borders from a country like the U.S has taken a toll on the values of sanctity of human life in Nigeria. "Like everything else, man is becoming a commodity in the market place. from the "coca-colonization" of the world, we have arrived at the "CNNization" of the world" (Elaiwu, 2000).

Using the satellite technology, conferences involving various people from different countries can be organized without any of the participants meeting physically. Economic transactions are now increasingly conducted without money. We now have electronic banking. Currently, telephone banking has added to the technology of jet speed economy.

Technological revolution is transforming every sector of the global society from manufacturing to construction, and from agriculture to the service sector. Not only is the revolution bringing about greater efficiency, but also variety, speed and precision of the means of delivery. Time more than ever is becoming money; time more than ever is in short supply; and time more than ever is changing everything. Information superhighways will flatten international boundaries especially with the proliferation of satellite and computer networks. This will create new forms of insecurity and new side-effects.

Conclusion

There is nothing wrong with the world being globalized. Thus, of all the changes in the global system, technological revolution has been the most profound in its impact. Similarly, the same technological revolution which facilitates the building of a global hamlet through more sophisticated communication equipment, has helped to alienate one human group from the other, this is a double-edged sword. The developing countries have benefited from globalization so far but in small measure. A lot still needs to be done in order to realize the objectives of globalization in developing nations.

Recommendations

In order that globalization can create real impact in the developing nations, the following recommendations should be taken into consideration.

- Developing countries must seriously examine their democratic structures with a view of working on the negative areas militating against the set up.
- Developing countries should be properly educated on the current move to globalize the world so that they can appreciate the benefits behind globalization.
- Developing countries must learn to continuously depend on western assistance but should endeavour to stand on their own.
- Developing countries should pay greater attention to human rights and women empowerment for good nation building.
- Developing nations should learn to live in peace without which development cannot be achieved.

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- Finally, developing countries must plan properly towards their development and not to be pushed foolishly by the west into things they cannot handle.

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