

GLOBALIZATION AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

This paper x-rays gains of globalization which can be harnessed towards the overall development of the Nigerian nation. It explains this social change which is now sweeping through the world's global village and goes further to explore the dangers which globalization brings with it and which must be avoided as they pose serious danger to the national interest and as a result inimical to national development. Certain variables which have given strong impetus to the flourishing of globalization are highlighted. Finally, it proffers recommendations on how best to exploit the bounteous gains of globalization towards national development.

Introduction

There is growing global consciousness in coming together of countries and people into a life of international interdependence. In a dramatic sense, this social change at world level began probably in the last decade and ever since this phenomenal awareness has accelerated in tempo. Globalization has economic undertone, for in a way it is internationalization of business. (Cannon, 1994).

According to Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania (2002:3), globalization "is the term some use to describe the growing worldwide interdependence of people and countries". It notes that this growing worldwide integration has produced a whole series of consequences, ranging from economic, political, cultural to environmental. These consequences are both useful and harmful.

The Human Development Report (1999) observes that people's lives around the world are linked more deeply, more intensely, (and) more immediately than ever before. In the process, it continues, it opens many opportunities, giving new power to good and bad.

With the wind of globalization here with and around us, it is no more a journey into the bygone days of our ancestors; it cannot be a matter of jettisoning or turning our back from contemporary realities. (Awoonor, 1975). Thus, as globalization encourages movement of people and recourses, the twenty-first century planet earth is no longer the former global village where England used to be for the English alone, Nigeria for Nigerians or France for the French. Rather it is a world in a supersonic flux where the Palestinians must accommodate the Jews in their midst and vice versa, the Owerri-Igbo of Africa must accept **Ama-Awusa*** as a fact of life. Igbo land is no longer the land of Umuofia, Chiolu or Aliakoro (Achebe, 1958). The contemporary world does not completely applaud Okonkwo Unoka, Nwadigo or Olumba without also giving them black pebble (Amadi, 1969).

Wolf, a financial columnist, as reported by Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania (2002), is convinced that globalization is the great economic event of our era. It argues that it is now bringing unprecedented opportunities to billions of people the world over.

Commenting on the challenges of this epoch-making global phenomenon, Shevardnadze, President of Georgia, cited by Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania (2002:3), declares:

We, the people of the earth, are one large family. The new epoch offers new challenges and new global problems, such as environmental catastrophes, exhaustion of resources, bloody conflicts and poverty.

(**Ama Awusa refers to the settlement of the Hausa community.*)

Variables in Favour of Globalization

A number of social variables are in favour of globalization which accounts for its flourishing in leaps and bounds. For instance, the divisive blocs of the Cold War have practically disappeared. Trade barriers have come down and so the world's major financial markets have been co-operating and integrating and travel has been cheaper and easier. Technology is another social variable congenial for globalization. Technology, no doubt, has revolutionized communication during the preceding decade. Consequently, access to people and information from any part of the world has improved remarkably. The tools of technology comprise the television, the telephone and the Internet.

Many good people of the world have access to television with the result that no country can truly cut itself off from the global media. On the impact the telephone plays in enhancing globalization, we notice that fibre-optic cables and satellite networks have slashed telephone costs to the barest minimum. In addition, wireless networks have made the mobile phones that go by various trade names as commonplace as the computer. Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania (2002) estimates that by the end of the year 2002, there would be about one billion people who use mobile phones and adds that many of these users would be able to use their phone to access the Internet.

The Internet which is also a global collection of many different types of computers and computer networks that are linked together, has brought radical revolution in the information industry (Anyachonkeya, 2000). The upsurge in information is unprecedented in the history of the world that many more people have been able to learn about so many people's lives and ideas. (Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania, 2002) The mad craze for information and a colossus of information which assail us these days have given rise to what has been described as information overload; while some even referred to it as information anxiety. (Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania, 1997).

Benefits of Globalization for National Development

Certainly, globalization has benefits which can be harnessed towards national development. Through the World Wide Web, (a part of the Internet) of the information superhighway, the world has become truly linked together. People and countries of the world can exchange information, ideas, and cultures and economic resources of the world which are not equitably distributed. The beneficial aspects of these are distilled, as it were, to build the Nigerian nation. When we come to the education industry, the information superhighway brings the intellectual community into a close-knit information unit. With it, teachers have access to diverse literature that abound in the other parts of the world's global village. By means of various software application packages we are able to access these numerous literature. The Internet is particularly an asset to scholars and researchers in developing lands such as Nigeria where there is a great paucity or dearth of relevant literature on their disciplines (Anyachonkeya, 2003). Scholars and teachers need all these source materials for the manpower development of our great country.

Another benefit which globalization has made possible from the tools of technology is the electronic mail, as admitted by Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania (1997). Through the E-mail computer device, the computer makes it possible to send letter messages to any part of the world in minutes or less. It states that this feat is possible because the electronic letter travels from the sender's computer, often through a device called modem-modulator-demodulator device. On the internationalization of business proper, which is what globalization epitomizes, a number of advantages are harnessed in the interdependence of people and countries. Some argue that globalization offers enormous potential for the eradication of poverty in the twenty-first century. The reason for this optimism is the dramatic increase in prosperity which globalization has brought in its wake.

Similarly, some people assert that globalization increases incentives for not making war and it increases the costs of going to war in more ways than in any previous era in modern history. They add that more interaction among people improves global solidarity (Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania, 2002)

Globalization favours competitive interdependence as principal markets are strongly interlinked. Multinational firms need to operate in practically all prominent markets. Besides, international technical standards are favourable in major markets. Also cultural and institutional norms are not an obstacle to global marketing (Williams and Ellis, 1995).

Kofi Annan, the U. N. Scribe, quoted by Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania (2002:11), insists that globalization must succeed if and only if it favours the rich and the poor. According to him:

If globalization is to succeed, it must succeed for poor and rich alike. It must

deliver rights no less than riches. It must provide social justice and equity no less than economic prosperity and enhanced communication.

Dangers of Globalization

Globalization, like many human achievements, has both an upside and a downside. Let us then appraise the other side of the coin. Globalization appears to widen the gap between the extremely rich countries and the extremely poor countries. This fear is echoed in this excerpt from Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania (2002: 4):

The net worth of the 200 richest people on earth now exceeds the combined income of 40 percent of the people who live on the planet - some 2.5 billion people. And while wages continue to rise in wealthy countries, 80 impoverished countries have actually seen a decline in average income over the past ten years.

Globalization breeds inequalities not only in economic terms but in the other pursuits of life. This anxiety is expressed by a research organization, "Our Global Neighborhood", as carried by Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania (2002: 6):

The global neighborhood we have today is, like most neighborhoods, far from ideal; it has many imperfections. Its residents are not all fairly treated; they do not have the same opportunities. Millions are so deprived that they do not think they belong to a neighborhood.

Globalization carried with it crime and terrorism. Drug cartels, for instance, take advantage of globalization to explore a host of opportunities to launder their billion-dollar profits in the name of internationalization of business. Matters are made worse or complicated by the elimination of many Customs (and Excise) controls and the increasing movement of people and in addition make it easier to transport illegal drugs from one country or continent to another. This global phenomenon has encouraged the spread of HIV/AIDS (and SARS) epidemic as well as other pestilences at a global scale unprecedented in history.

It is not only diseases and people that exploit the gains of globalization, but unwelcome animal species, microbes and viruses also are among such unwanted global "travelers". For instance, water hyacinth from South Africa has spread to 50 tropical countries, where it blocks canals and destroys fishponds. (Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania, 2002).

Globalization breeds social divisions and in the process, frustration has mounted. Ironically, while governments around the world make frantic efforts to tap the gains of globalization, they unwittingly espouse to their citizenry its excesses. Sadly, greed, selfishness, and loss of community seem to be taking over the world of mankind, (Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania, 2003).

Globalization rekindles the vexed social infemo of child labour, child trafficking and other immoral practices associated with them so much so that children of the world are exposed to various shapes of child labour. These shapes of child labour include domestic service, commercial sexual exploitation, forced and bonded labourers and industrial and plantation labour. On child prostitution alone, Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania, (2003:5) reports that: In one Latin-American country, a Congress Committee of Inquiry reported that there are more than 500,000 female child prostitutes, even though prostitution is illegal. In another land, there are about 300,000 child prostitutes on the streets, especially in areas where there is drug traffic.

It has been incontrovertibly asserted that no one would publicly argue that exploiting children as prostitutes is acceptable in any circumstance. Yet child labour is one of the legacies of globalization to humankind!

Another negative wind of globalization is the proliferation of pornography on the cable systems and the Internet and which is more readily available. Without doubt, pornography is about profits, pure and simple (Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania, 2003)

The "L.C. M." of all these negative social scenario in the goatskin bag of globalization is that

there is today a lack of a moral compass, along with an increasing emphasis on materialistic goals and selfish individualism which has promoted a culture of greed and indifference to the feelings of others. As a result, our long-held values have suffered a notable decline as we find in family breakups, poor work ethic and unruly behaviour characteristic of today's declining values (Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania, 2003). In addition, the core values which African, nay, Nigerian traditional societies cherish such as those of purity and chastity, honesty and integrity, moderation and humility, are quickly bidding us goodbye (Okigbo, 1983).

These disturbing issues examined here represent a tip of the iceberg of the avalanche of negative influences which the bad visitation of globalization has come with for our consumption. To this end, there is the dire need for caution. Until the rotten tooth is pulled out, the mouth must chew with caution (Rotomi, 1971). We must tread softly as we harness the benefits of globalization for national development else we find ourselves shopping from the markets angels would fear to tread. This is the heart of the matter.

Recommendations

Against this backdrop, in our examination of globalization, this paper makes the following recommendations:

- i. This paper agrees with *Human Development Report* (1999) that national and global governance have to be reinvented with human development and equity at their core.
- ii. Global action towards entrenching ethical values has become expedient. Without global ethics, frictions and tensions of living in the global neighbourhood will multiply, and, without sincere leadership even the best designed human institutions and structures will crumble,
- iii. Various governments in the country should mount enlightenment programmes designed to educate their citizenry on the gains and liabilities of globalization so that its gains would be harnessed without imbibing the negative influences which would be detrimental to national interests, ideals and values.
- iv. The Golden Rule (Do unto others as you would like others to do unto you) must form the cornerstone of the country's code of conduct.
- v. Globalization is a good servant but a bad master. It is a man of the "white body" if you shake hands with him, he will invariably ask for embrace. Therefore, we should not embrace everything about globalization without caution.

Conclusion

This paper may have attempted examining globalization and its gains which can be harnessed for national development. It may also have sought to explain this global phenomenon as well as explored its dangers which should be avoided as they conflict with national interest. It may also have tried to highlight the technology behind globalization. In all, it has tried to offer some suggestions on how best to utilize the benefits of globalization without compromising our long-held core values. We should look before we leap because a stitch in time saves nine. An ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure.

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