

GLOBALISATION AND THE CONTRADICTION OF NIGERIA'S SELF-RELIANCE

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Abstract

For long Africa in general and Nigeria in particular has struggled to extricate itself from colonialism, imperialism and neo-colonialism. The end of these techniques to manipulate, and subjugate Africa to perpetual subservience has not been seen when suddenly the concept and process of globalisation in its present form came up. Globalisation can be taken as a process involving the increasing integration of goods and services and capital markets across national boundaries through information technology. We contend that globalisation is a device by the developed countries to increase their wealth through unhindered access to the resources of the 3^r world to the detriment of the poorer countries. Nigeria being in this category of peripheral states relies on the developed countries in virtually everything especially in the area of technology; this being the case, her benefit from globalisation will be limited and in fact dictated by the industrialized countries of Western Europe, North America and Japan. This makes the idea of self-reliance impossible.

Introduction

Conceptualizing Globalization

Let us indulge in the expose of the concept of globalisation as has been variously defined, used and abused. According to Friedman (1999), globalisation is the integration of markets, finance and technologies in a way that is shrinking the world from a size medium to a size small and enabling each of us to reach around the world further, faster and cheaper than ever before ... like all previously international systems, it is directly or indirectly shaping the domestic politics, economic policies and foreign relations of virtually every country.

For Khor (2000) economic globalisation is not a novel phenomenon because it is a process which the developed world has used to extend their outreach through trade and production to other territories of the world. But the last thirty years have seen the increase of globalisation especially because of technological developments and the policies of liberalisation which have swept across the world. He sees as the most important aspects of economic globalisation as the breaking down of national economic barriers, the international spread of trade, financial and production activities, and the growing power of transnational corporations and the international financial institutions in these processes. Part of the view here is that globalisation is not new, that it has been in practice for centuries when the colonialists used it as a tool for the exploitation of the colonies.

Ihonvbere (2002, p7) also holds the view that economic globalisation is not new. The differences between the old and the new "are in the rapidity, depth and intensity at which global markets are being penetrated and integrated while the hands of finance capital seem to reign supreme".

The process of globalisation can both be vertical and horizontal. As Asobie (2001) has stated globalisation is a process of both vertical and horizontal integration involving increasing volume and variety of transnational transactions in goods and services, in international capital flow, in man's migration and through a rapid and widespread diffusion of technology, economic globalisation can also be regarded as the intensification of cross-border trade and increased financial and foreign direct investment flows promoted by rapid liberalisation and advances in information technology (Watkms 2002).

It will be too simplistic to think of globalisation solely as an economical issue. It is multidimensional and covers all facets of life; it is about economics, governance, culture, mass media amongst others. It is from this perspective that Idris (2004:4) sees globalisation as a process that involves more than economic and technological issues, as it also involves other dimensions of human

life. Specifically, in addition to economic, technology etc, it involves also governance, social development and culture across national borders.

The phenomenon of globalisation is a worldwide movement from local to universal socio-economic system aimed at the world market. Through the instrumentality of this unification therefore, the whole world is reduced to a global 'village market' which offers humanity the opportunity to utilise the resultant technological advancement and socio-economic resources for their common good. In this advanced technology facilities such as the internet, computers, fax, cyberspace etc are deceived in a bid to drastically reduce space and operational time-lag through information technology for worldwide business (Ogbeifun, 2004). Having examined some definitions of globalisation, one would like to see how Nigeria can be self-reliant in a globalised world.

Self-Reliance for Nigeria in a Globalised World

Without doubt technological advancement propels globalisation. Shaikh (1999), quoted by Ailemen (2004:4) rightly stated that:

It is obvious that technological changes have provided much of the indispensable infrastructure that have accelerated the process of globalisation. Also observed is the rapid development in the hi-tech and networked multinationals are creating a borderless economic world such that it has become difficult for any nation to pursue its own economic policies without recourse to the global trend.

Globalisation is presented to the Third World by the Developed World as a sine-qua non for integration and therefore for development. In other words, it is a panacea for extricating the poorer countries from under-development as these countries will be privileged to tap from the experiences and resources of the developed countries. So far, this has proved to be a fallacy as the gap is becoming wider. Nigeria and other Third World countries on which globalisation is foisted upon are supposed to share the benefit of a global integrated economy through trade and capital flows. All things being equal, their goods and services which have comparative advantage will have access to an enlarged world market. With greater access to international private capital, the country can realise higher economic growth. In fairness to globalisation, some developing countries like China, Malaysia, Indonesia, Republic of Korea, to name a few have in the 1980s recorded rapid economic progress, increased capital flow, generated increased employment through their foray into global markets for new technologies. This is the result of or benefit of globalisation.

Nigeria has not been able to realise these benefits and one doubts if it can in the near future in view of the reasons will shall examine later. There are many critics of globalisation who believe that it is not the best for Nigeria, Africa and the third world in general. For instance, Ajayi (2003) enumerated five areas where globalisation will not benefit the developing nations. He states that:

- i) globalisation entails many risks, including inequality between rich and poor countries;
- ii) the threat to the sovereignty of small nations which can lead to both social and political instability;
- iii) the exploitation of workers in developing countries;
- iv) the destruction of the environment of small and poor nations that lack the capacity to influence the policies of transnational corporations; and v)
- the risk of destabilising capital movement.

Nigeria is in a precariously disadvantaged position and can therefore only reap the disadvantages of globalisation. A country will benefit if it is in the group of the developed nations which call the shots and dictate the pace. As asserted by Khor (2001:1&2):

While economic globalisation is a very uneven process, with increased trade and investment being focused in a few countries, almost all countries are greatly affected by this process. For example, a

low-income country may account for only a minuscule part of world trade, but changes in demand for or prices of its export commodities or a policy of rapidly reducing its import duties can have a major economic and social effect on that country. That country may have a marginal role in world trade but world trade has a major effect on it...

Globalisation has greatly restricted the ambit of economic independence of nations and more so that of the developing nations like Nigeria. But Thomas Friedman, a columnist in The New York Times, sees globalisation as the height of dawn, the 'golden strait jacket' that will force contentious publics to understand that the logic of globalisation is that of peace and democracy. For people like this, nothing is ever wrong with globalisation, both poor and rich benefit and in fact the poor benefit more since they will have access to new technologies which will increase their individual autonomy and by extension enhance their initiative.

Globalisation without doubt has its benefits, but we contend that the underdeveloped countries have no capacity to reap these benefits but more of the disadvantages. It is in line with our contention that Hottmann (2002: 108-9) sees Friedman's optimism as resting on 'very fragile foundation'. He argued further that globalisation is largely an American creation rooted in the period after World War 11, and based on U.S. economic might, 'globalisation's reach remains limited because it excludes many poor countries, and the states that it does transform react in different ways... The world is far away from a perfect integration of markets, services and factors of production. Sometimes, that simple existence of borders slows down and can even paralyse this integration; at other times it gives integration the flavours and colors of the dominant state (as the case of the internet). The dominant states are obviously the developed nations of North America, Japan and Europe. He goes further to argue that the attractive idea that globalisation improves human condition through the abolition of barriers is dubious. He believes that "it is in fact only a sum of techniques (audio and video cassettes, the internet, instantaneous communications) that are at the disposal of states or private actors. Self-interest and ideology, not humanitarian reasons are what drive these actors". For this reason, Hoffmann (2002) states that "the behaviour of these actors is at variance with the vision of globalisation as an enlightenment-based utopia that is simultaneously scientific, rational and universal".

Globalisation encourages co-operation and this can lead one to think erroneously that states and wealthy private players act altruistically. This is at variance with the practice of international relations because states do not act in the spirit of altruism but on the basis of self-interest. For any state, more so the weak ones to think that the train of globalisation driven by the rich, developed states will wait for them will definitely be engaging in self-delusion.

Globalisation can be conflict generating for developing states because of their weak infrastructural base. Elaborating on this, Ailemen (2004) comments that:

presently, globalisation is intrinsically conflict generating because it entails the concentration of economic power in private hands and by so doing complicates the process of running sovereign states. It aggravates the tendency to exploit and oppress labour and to repress human freedom and as such there seems to be increasing social and economic inequality (Pp 5-6).

Hoftmann (2002) is also of the view that for reasons like misery, injustice, humiliation, attachment to tradition, aspirations to more than just a better standard of living, the purported enlightenment stereotype of globalisation provokes revolt and dissatisfaction.

The sum total of the above views is that globalisation can and has generated conflict in many weak states. The underdeveloped and developing states have weak economic and political structures, which have not been able to withstand the currents of globalisation. The social and attitudinal aspects of the life of the citizens are jolted and these engender conflict.

Recommendations

After all that have been said, the problems are surmountable with time and with deliberate policies. For Nigeria to benefit maximally from globalization, it has to develop and sustain the necessary or required conditions for the success of liberalization. These include good governance, good economic management amongst others. The government must as a matter of deliberate policy increase funding for education especially in the area of science and technology. It is also pertinent that Nigeria should be on the vanguard in organising other African and Third World countries towards effective co — operation. This effective co - operation will allow for the pooling together of their meagre resources for development purpose. With these, one hopes that Nigeria can turn into a major player and a beneficiary from the globalization process in the next two decades.

Conclusion

We have argued that globalisation has its positive and negative sides and that it was imposed on the world by the developed world championed by the United States, Japan and Western Europe because of their technological advancement. We also state that African countries as members of the third world have nothing much to benefit since they have nothing much to give. Nigeria belongs to this category. How self - reliant can Nigeria be in the face of globalization? Can Nigeria withdraw from a globalised international system? The answer is no. Nigeria with its economic and political institutions is a weak state and therefore cannot conceptualise self - reliance. Like all African countries, it is a peripheral state and does not have the capacity to withdraw either from global economic -system and can also not be in a position to be an equal participant in the globalization process.

It will be ironical or a contradiction for Nigeria to visualise self-reliance when it is weighed down by a huge debt burden running to about thirty two billion U. S. dollars. The terms of loan re -scheduling are such that will perpetually keep the debtor countries in a subservient position. The world market prices of our primary exports are low and externally decided. The country's dependent nature puts it in a disadvantaged position to even negotiate with donors and creditors, The UN which should have been of assistance is hijacked by the powerful nations. As aptly put by Khor (2001):

The powers **of** the UN, **in** which the South is **in** a **more** favourable position; have been diminished, whereas the mandate and power of the institutions under the control of developed countries (the IMF, World Bank and WTO) have been increased tremendously. The North has leverage in the Bretton Woods institutions and the WTO to shape the content of globalization to serve their needs and to formulate policies which the developing countries have to take on (P. 14).

This is the situation in which Nigeria and other developing countries find themselves.

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