

REPOSITIONING GLOBALISATION IN NIGERIA

Fatima Oyine Ibrahim

Abstract

Experience in many regions of the world like East Asia, Africa and Latin America is contrary to the ideology of globalisation which presupposes that it is good for everyone, at all times everywhere. This is because in these regions, after being part of the globalising process for many years, they continue to be mired in poverty, hunger, malnutrition, and economic stagnation, including slow or negative economic growth (UN, 1997). Nigeria is one of the countries in Africa that has been caught up in the web of the negative impacts that the phenomenon of globalisation has inflicted. This paper is an attempt to take a scholarly step towards making globalisation more relevant to Nigeria, by doing this, the paper will provide a conceptual definition of globalisation, the impediments as well as the impact of globalisation on Nigeria will be highlighted. Finally, the paper will examine ways of repositioning globalisation to make it sustainable and profitable to Nigeria.

Introduction

Globalisation has continued to attract enormous debate, controversy, protests and demonstrations from scholars with all vehemence. These reactions to the concept and its application is not unconnected with the way globalisation has polarized the world into two. the south consisting of the developing countries on the one hand and the north, consisting of the industrialized, technologically advanced countries on the other. In this scenario, the process of globalisation as it is now promoted, practiced and imposed on the global economy leads to a situation where there are big winners and big losers and the basic pattern of winners and losers is unchanging and unfair, for the winners are invariably the rich countries and the losers, the poor and weaker ones (Mohammed, 2001).

Globalisation is an avenue through which the imperialist circles have been speaking and acting through global organizations dominated by them. Examples of such organizations which are often exploitative of the poorer countries are the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, the World Trade Organization, the Group of Seven industrialized countries (G-7) to mention a few.

Nigeria is one of the numerous countries of the world which has fallen victim to the grips of the globalisation process. This is because like other weaker and poorer countries, globalisation continues to engender serious concerns and anxiety because as a net importer of goods and services from the rest of the world, after many years of belonging to the global village, she has got nothing to show for it as the citizens "continue to be mired in poverty, hunger and malnutrition and economic stagnation, including slow or negative economic growth" (UN, 1997:7). There is the urgent need therefore to reposition globalisation to make it sustainable, environmentally sensitive. That is, to make globalisation responsive to the yearnings and aspirations of Nigerians so that the country can be one of the winners in the globalisation game. This paper is an attempt to take a scholarly step towards repositioning globalisation in Nigeria. In doing this, the paper will provide a conceptual definition of globalisation, the impact of globalisation on Nigeria as well as how to make globalisation sustainable and beneficial to Nigeria.

Conceptualizing Globalisation

The concept of globalisation which means many things to different people is as complex as it is ideological. It has gained ascendancy and popular usage among many social scientists today. Therefore, it is an issue worthy of scholarly attention because of its impact on global economy. Globalisation has been described as "the widening, deepening and speeding up of worldwide inter-connectedness in all aspects of contemporary social life" (Obi, 2004:441). Anyakoha describes it thus: Globalisation represents the emerging worldwide interdependence of individuals and countries which we characterized by various economic, political, cultural and social relations. This phenomenon is responding to an unprecedented contraction of space and time occasioned by the development of new means of communication and information technologies across the plane (2003:1).

In the same vein, globalisation has been defined in terms of its economic benefits as: ...the process by which markets and production in different

countries are becoming increasingly inter-dependent due to the dynamics of trade in goods and services and flows of capital and technology. It is not a new phenomenon but a continuation of developments that have been in trend for some considerable time (Goshit, 2003:131).

The import one can make from the above definitions is that globalisation has assumed its position in the world economy just recently and has deeply impacted on all facets of diverse global economies. Despite the argument in favor of globalisation by scholars, it is not without its consequences especially on a developing country like Nigeria. It is on the basis of this that the next section of the paper will dwell.

Consequences of Globalisation on Nigeria

To appreciate the impact of globalization on a country like Nigeria, there is need to take an academic voyage of the various constraints to our globalisation efforts. For Nigeria to fully partake in the globalization process effectively, the following are the constraints inherent in our polity which must be tackled. Globalisation demands industrialization and a formidable economy buttressed on competitiveness which are all lacking in Nigeria as a result of poor knowledge and information flow. This has negatively impacted on the various sectors of our national life. For example, in the educational sector:

Many Nigerian Universities and other tertiary institutions operate below the information poverty line, yet universities are expected to be the "citadel and fountain-head" of old and new knowledge. Old knowledge continues to be recycled. Faculty and students operate outside of the mounting wealth of new knowledge in the global village. This is a serious handicap to development (Anyakoha, 2003:11).

The manufacturing and agricultural sectors are not left out of this problem as they lack access to basic information on what is new in their areas. This hinders their effectiveness and hence, contributes to low industrialization and lack of competitiveness which are however, basic prerequisites for globalisation.

Another constraint which hinders our efforts in a globalising world is the problem of non-availability of basic facilities such as portable water supply, good road networks Linking the rural areas to the townships, electricity and so on. This makes many of the industries operating in this harsh environment to virtually depend on infrastructure self-provisioning. This leads to high cost of production. Thus, our locally produced goods are vulnerable to external domination as their prices are relatively cheaper.

Another obstacle which hinders Nigeria in the globalisation process is corruption which cuts across every part of the country and all sections from the private to the public, from the top to the bottom, and even the poorest of the poor. Anyakoha noted that "the public sector is bloated, corrupt and inefficient, while the private sector is prostrate, as it is faced with a debilitating operating environment" (2003:12). Other constraints to the globalisation efforts of Nigeria are problems of high rate of illiteracy, poverty and low productivity in the country.

The effects of globalisation process in recent years has no doubt increased dramatically in man) parts of the world as there is increased interaction of peoples, governments and businesses across international borders demonstrating the tremendous-economic, political and social effects of trade liberalization and the recent revolution in communication technology. The benefits of globalisation have however, not reached everyone equally as many people in the developing world in general and Nigeria in particular are being left behind and becoming more and more marginalized.

In Nigeria, there is no gainsaying that the economics of globalisation have been incredibly beneficial to many people as the internet and advances in telecommunications have improved the livelihoods and access to information of millions but globalization comes down to much more than just communication. Areas like workers' rights, the environment, culture, health, poverty level as well as the overall development must also be globalised. The total neglect of these areas makes • globalisation to be viewed as a curse rather than a blessing to developing countries, Nigeria inclusive. In this regard, Edulaigho{2003:5}, has asserted that:

for the developing world, globalisation is tantamount to neocolonialism if not re-invented slavery. It is the worst set-back that could happen to their industrialization aspirations in so far as the world economy is structured on specialization, comparative advantage, competition and narrow national

interests. It ensures that the producers of raw material would remain as such for all time, deprived of the liberty to determine prices of their products and the direction of their trades (cited in Anyakoha).

The following are the impacts of globalisation which makes it to be viewed as a curse-in Nigeria. Trade liberalization is one aspect of globalisation that functions in favour of the developed countries to the disadvantage of the developing countries. This is because in the first instance, when Nigeria ratified the World Trade Organization (WTO) treaty in December 1994 and became a founding member of the organization in 1995, the contract duly signed set the rules of trade between nations, these documents provide the legal ground rules for international commerce. Unfortunately for Nigeria and other African countries, they were not adequately represented at the negotiations that gave birth to WTO neither did they care to consult their citizens before signing the treaty. The WTO regulations have continued to widen the gap between the developed and the Third World countries because the trade rules are more in favour of the industrialized countries. In Nigeria as a case in point, as the oil-rich communities of the Niger Delta suffer the adverse effects of mining and oil exploration such as oil spillage, the multi-nationals reap the profit, the bulk of which are often repatriated to their home countries. The African countries have been challenging such obnoxious regulations and demand their reversal because:

...the balance of power in trade has shifted ever more in favor of the richer countries in the Northern Hemisphere with the North freely imposing its economic models on the poorer South without any sense of guilt... Under the rules of the WTO, developing countries have been pressurized into opening up their markets, while the rich countries of the North continue to protect theirs through tariffs, subsidies and intellectual property rights (BBC cited in Nwagbara 2003:207).

Thus, this has virtually made Nigeria to be a dumping ground for different types of products ranging from electronics, second hand clothing, used cars and refrigerators, canned foods, frozen chickens and so on. The question that deserves an urgent answer is why is it that despite all their globalisation and liberalization rhetoric, so many of the rich countries will not open up their agricultural market and they will not remove the barriers on those products like textiles, clothing, and footwear? American companies have proliferated around the world bringing US-styled products, services and cultures to Nigeria which Nigerians have never tasted and experienced respectively before. This trend has been a particular influence to young people in Nigeria, little wonder that our youths now in an attempt to imitate these cultures, dress half naked without being abashed.

Globalisation has also brought medical consequences as the increase in trade and travel across international borders has exposed Nigerians to diseases that were unknown until recently. For example, AIDS which was hitherto an unknown disease is the biggest threat to the poor in many developing countries. For example, by the end of 1999, an estimated number of women and children living with AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa were 13 million and one million respectively (*Global Perspective*, 2000). Other diseases, like cerebrovascular disease, heart disease, traffic accidents, and major depression are now on the increase.

Job losses and mounting unemployment are some of the consequences of globalisation. As a result of the massive importation, many of the local manufacturing industries are forced to close down, when the environment becomes too hostile for survival. This has led to the scourge of unemployment for our indigenous people, while sustaining jobs in those countries from which importations are made. The Nigerian Labor Congress (NLC) reported not less than 500,000 jobs lost as a result of trade liberalization (Ajagu, cited in Anyakoha, 2003). The resultant effect is non-utilization and/or under-utilization of human capital leading to hunger, poverty, crime, conflict, diseases, prostitution, human and child trafficking, mounting family crises, various forms of child abuses and all the ills that add up to deafening underdevelopment.

External intervention by the agents of globalisation in Nigerian domestic affairs has undermined the sovereignty and moral authority of the State. Such agents like the multilateral financial institutions, the government of the dominant powers, multinational corporations and a host of other Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) influence government's policies and programs which are more often in their favor but to the detriment of Nigerians. The powerlessness of the State resulting from external intervention has caused governments, caught up in the storm of globalisation, are taking steps to give more autonomy to private initiatives and to cede some political grounds to powerful foreign

corporations. To buttress this point, Boutros Boutros-Ghali once observed that "the time of absolute and exclusive sovereignty... has passed and States must find a balance between the needs of good internal governance and the requirement of an ever more interdependent world" (cited in Ihonvbere, 2002).

Another danger posed by the globalisation process is that the developed countries have over the years increased their income to the detriment of the countries they were supposedly assisting through their financial and technical assistance programmes. Experience has shown that the borrowing countries spend almost what they borrowed on interest payment. Ibrahim, has warned of recent that. "Nigeria could probably be on its way to becoming another Argentina, where foreign debt crippled the economy and ushered in a wave of political instability amidst protest and riot by the citizenry" (2005:17). The reason for his warning was the recent outright refusal of the members of the National Assembly in Nigeria to approve money to be used towards Nigeria's debt service payment obligations. The members queried the logic of repeatedly servicing the county's foreign debt when each year, the debt profile keeps increasing. For instance, between 2003 and 2005, Nigeria has paid about \$3.4 billion in debt servicing alone but instead of reducing, the debt has rather increased from \$32 billion to \$36 billion" (Ibrahim, 2005).

The brain-drain phenomenon is another impact of globalisation process that has challenged Nigeria. Highly skilled manpower earns more income in the technologically advanced countries like in Britain or America than in less developed countries like Nigeria. Many Nigerian experts especially in the health and education sectors in search of greener pasture have left for other countries. This brain drain syndrome doesn't augur well for the development of Nigeria.

Despite the impacts of globalisation as analyzed above, the globalisation process is not without its benefits to Nigeria. Unfortunately, however, the developed countries presently benefit more than the developing countries. The onus lies on the shoulders of the individuals, groups and government in Nigeria therefore, to reposition globalisation in such a way that its benefits to the country outweigh the costs. By so doing, Nigeria will be on her way to sustainable development.

Repositioning Globalisation in Nigeria

In Nigeria, the present globalisation efforts hasn't yielded much as men, women, and children still live in abject poverty. There is therefore, the need to evolve a most productive process of globalisation which is caring, compassionate and sensitive to our needs and aspirations. What developing countries especially Nigeria need is an enlightened globalisation which will ensure the common development of all, not across the world but also within the individual countries. To achieve this, government's policies and actions should be geared towards the benefit of Nigerians. Among such policies is the establishment of a Nigerian monetary system which will ensure a stable Nigerian currency as was obtainable 1970's, when the Nigerian naira was stronger than the American dollar and almost at par with the British pounds sterling. This will ensure that whatever amount realized from the petrol-dollar sub-sector is used for meaningful development.

Government's policies that would protect the local industries as well as encourage competition, industrialization, small and medium scale enterprises should be encouraged. Policies that discourage reckless and unpatriotic importation of frivolous goods and services into Nigeria should be given premium by the government.

One of the central operating principles of globalisation is economic efficiency and competitiveness. This can only be achieved with adequate education and knowledge. It is necessary therefore, to strengthen the entire education system in order to reduce to the barest minimum the high level of illiteracy rate and to improve the quality of education in the country. Government's educational policies and commitments should be geared towards investing heavily in this important resource area so that the country can compete favorably in the new global economic order. Since the new globalisation is built on knowledge and information, the government should revitalize the existing higher institutions, revamp research and encourage the growth of specialized knowledge that will support the new economy and society. In our zeal to acquire education for all, in the light of globalisation, Nigeria should provide opportunities for training, in areas of individual and community life so that not only the intellectually-gifted can benefit from university education but all Nigerians should have access to continuing education and facilities.

The trade liberalization policy of globalisation doesn't augur well for Nigeria. Therefore, it should be accompanied with a set of rules aimed at protecting our indigenous industries. This is because a

reckless approach to trade liberalization without due consideration for one's own ability to cope, will only contribute to a vicious cycle of trade and balance of payments deficits, financial instability, debt and recession not to mention the social costs of dumping and general economic erosion. Critics of globalisation advise that Nigeria should protect her young industries at her initial stage of development because they cannot compete with their counterparts in the developed countries.

A crippled agriculture sector is the bane of any economy, there is therefore, the need to revamp it so that the underutilized agricultural capacities and endowments can be fully and efficiently lapped. This can be achieved by introducing new technologies, improving farm yields through intensive research and extension services. The government should make agriculture attractive to private investors. These inward looking strategies will enable the country to be self-reliant and self-sufficient in food production without importing same from abroad. Appropriate attention should be given to the rural and urban areas alike by providing them with stable electricity supply, portable water, telecommunication services, and good road networks. The various scientific research institutes and agencies should be revamped and utilized to conduct studies on projects with investment prospects in the country. Emphasis should be laid on viable policies on research and development.

On the brain drain syndrome, an enabling environment should be created. This environment should be attractive enough to motivate Nigerian professional's resident abroad to be interested in coming back home. The environment should also provide the necessary incentives to retain those based in Nigeria.

On the issue of our sovereignty, in as much as Nigerian government could welcome useful advice, any form of dictation should not be tolerated. To avoid unnecessary interference in our domestic affairs, the ideals of democracy should be implemented to the letter. This will enhance respect for the genuine wish of the people. Effective implementation of liberal democracy in Nigeria will require that the spirit of modernity is taken seriously. It is only by so doing that Nigeria can attain sustainable economic growth and industrialization.

Mohammed (2001), vividly captures the imperatives which can make globalisation process beneficial to developing countries when he suggested the following strategies as a guide. They are: The principles of rationality, readiness, representation, responsibility and self determination. He acknowledged the difficulty in implementing the above principles especially in a country like Nigeria which is debt-enslaved with IMF and the World Bank.

Concluding Remarks

This paper has examined the conceptual dimensions of globalisation. It has also presented the obstacles to Nigeria's fruitful incorporation in the global process effectively. The consequences of globalisation as well as how to recondition it to be beneficial to Nigerians have been highlighted.

Globalisation is a necessary evil which has come to stay, our concern as individuals and a nation should be on molding strategies that will consolidate our natural endowments and initiatives required to place Nigeria on a sound economic superstructure which can enhance the chances of the country benefiting from globalisation trend with the least cost incurred by the country in the process.

References

- Annan, K.A. (2002). *Globalisation and Governance in The Peoples: The Role of (he United Nations in the 21" Century*, New York: United Nations Department of Public Information.
- Anyakoha, E.U. (2003). *Positioning Nigeria for Development in an Era of Globalisation: Challenges and Strategies in Maduagwu, M.O. and Onu, V.C. (eds.) Globalisation and National Development in Nigeria*, Kuru: Full bright Alumni Association of Nigeria. *Global Perspective*, Volume VII, No. 3 September/October, 2000.
- Goshit, Z.D. (2003) *Globalization and Food: The Dilemma of Food Security in Nigeria in Maduagwu, M.O. and Onu, V.C. (eds.) Globalization and National Development in Nigeria*, Kuru: Full bright Alumni Association of Nigeria.

Ibrafiim, J. (2005). *Killer Debt Burden National Review*, No. 6, June 2005.

Ihonvbere, J. (2002). *Mow is Globalization Doing? A Paper Delivered at an Inaugural Address at the*

International Studies Lecture Series, Grand Valley State University, Michigan.

.Jega, A.M. (2002). Globalization and the Nation-State: An Overview a paper presented at the Damina School, Centre for Research and Documentation, Kano, August 27.

Mohammed, M. (2001). Globalization and its Impact on Developing Economies a Speech Delivered at the 10th World Economic Development Congress in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, June 27

Nwagbara, E.N. (2003). The Globalization Phenomenon and the Increasing Rate of Poverty in Africa: Towards a Cautious Response in Maduagwu, M.O. and Onu, V.C. (eds.) Globalization and National Development in Nigeria. Kuru: Full bright Alumni Association of Nigeria.

Obi, C.J. (2004). Globalization in Nigeria's Oil Industry: Implications for Local Politics in Agbaje, A.A.B.; Diamond L. and Onwudiwe E. (eds.) Nigeria's Struggle for Democracy and 'Governance, Ibadan: Ibadan University Press,

Toyo, E. (2000). Background to Globalization, Ibadan: ASUU Educational Publication Series.
United Nations (1 997) UN Agenda for Development.