

Archetype of globalization: illusory comfort of neo-colonialism in Africa

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Abstract

This paper argues that globalization has been employed to serve the imperialistic interest of the western world. In her drive for hegemony, the west has constantly sought ways of bringing other societies nearer so that domination and exploitation could be total and permanent. Global homogenization is perhaps the most powerful force affecting the Africa landscape today. Global trends such as economic inequality, violent extremism, environmental hazards, changing nature of power are directly related to the practice of neo-colonialism. Regrettably, this ongoing homogenization of ethos is more composed of the western liberal capitalism that is most aggressive in neo-colonial pursuits. It is continually shaping not only individuals but also the Africa continent. However, it has its own benefits. However, the negative sides of globalization as a set of policies have exacerbated existing injustice, inhumanity, created, and generated social, economic, political, and cultural inequalities, which should be address. The paper ends by making some recommendations and conclusion.

Keywords:

Globalization; neo-colonialism; cultural hegemony; Africa, colonial; economic; political; liberal democracy.

1 INTRODUCTION

The end of the cold war had enormous implications on the African continent as ruling regimes began facing increased pressure to liberalize their political economy system (Bassey & Ogar, 2018). After the collapsed of the Soviet Union, we are being encouraged to believe that liberal democracy has won. A prominent advocate of this prediction, Fukuyama (1989) stated in his view that it is not only the end of humankind ideological evolution but also the universalization of western liberal government. However, the dominant idea of contemporary bourgeois thinking is that increasing global integration of socio-cultural, economic, and political activities would enhance a global unity. As observed by Kolawole (2001) this apparent integration of world societies has been described as globalization.

As Asobie (2002) explains that globalization is the transfer of ideas and culture from the developed western world to the under – developed resulting in a so-called homogenization of cultures. Globalization is seen as an ideological construct used to trumpet western cultures and values and it is closely linked to the imperialist ideology. It could be reasonable argued that the philosophy of the emerging global village, is that of individual freedom, survival of the fittest and winner takes it all approach.

According Ogar et al, sadly, today more than thousand years of African domination through colonialism is witnessing the concentration of more wealth in the hands of very few. Moreover, this inequality was facilitated by globalization; an influential force used by West for a variety of reasons. Despite its benefits, it still encourages the continuation of the colonial model that led to injustices and inhumanity. From this perspective, Ogar and Ogar (2018) also argued that global homogenization is just an extension of neo-colonialism in the form of globalization. Global homogenization has an impact on cultures, is something imposed on people by market forces because of the dynamics of globalization, it veils only very thinly a built in relationship of inequality and domination between the rich and the poor in the globe. Nevertheless, focus in this paper, the researchers posit that globalization is designed by former colonial masters to advance their culture at the expense of weaker nations and its implications with reference to African continent. It is in delineating the origins of globalization that its connections with neo-colonialism come to the fore.

2 CONCEPTUALIZING GLOBALIZATION

The word globalization has been used to describe the phenomenally rapid expansion of many sorts of global interaction. The fact that the term globalization is new does not mean that many people have not been thinking and theorizing about global interconnectedness before. A German philosopher named Friedrich Hegel was the first theorist of globalization. Hegel talked of connections between disparate areas and places and about the emerging consciousness of such connections. He saw the possibility of imagining all of humanity as a kind of community while Kant had already developed a work in eternal peace (Okpe & Bassey, 2018). Globalization is not a new phenomenon. It has progressed throughout the cause of recorded history, though not in a steady or linear fashion. It is a multidimensional phenomenon. It has economic, social, cultural, and political dimensions.

Using the concept of globalization, Okey, et al, (2004) defines it as a process, which makes possible free movement of goods and services, capital flows, information and ideas flows as well as people across national borders, resulting in greater integration of world economics. In his own conceptual clarification, Smith (2006) echoing Okey, et al, says globalization is a process which involves much more than simply growing connection and interdependence, it is a historical process involving a fundamental shift or transformation in the spatial scale of human social organization that links distant relations across regions and continents.

As described by Robertson (1992) it is the compression of the world and intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole. In addition, Dicken (1992) held that it is the integration of the world technologically, economically and politically, is the most important development of our time. Nevertheless, globalization, the planet earth has become a

small village; the boundaries have been broken down between nations. Globalization has certain positive impacts such as trade liberalization, free capital mobility, political and technological development and the empowerment of multinational companies.

Although often cited, that it has an increasingly important role in the developed countries than developing countries. So, Carl (2011) defined in terms of a related series of phenomena which are characteristics of neo-liberal economic policies. It means the spread of free market capitalism to virtually every country in the world. In establishing a competitive society with maximum freedom for individuals to pursue their interests (Bassey & Mfonobong, 2018). It is assumed by neo-liberalism that the self can compete with others in the pursuit of private business interests. The excessive pursuit of the individuals interests in such a way that the interest of others, the good of the society and the overall welfare of humanity is completely discountenanced. All these have become the cardinal principles of globalization.

As much as has been achieved in connection with globalization, there is much more to be done. Such as inequality, poverty, cultural imperialism, terrorism, ethnic differences and soon, if all these are not properly managed, it can have extremely adverse consequence especially in Africa.

3 THE CONCEPT OF NEO-COLONIALISM

The year 1960 until date is witnessing a re-incarnation and a resurrecting of colonialism, which is neo-colonialism. Colonialism is a practice of domination, which involves the subjugation of one person to another. It is not easy to distinguish colonialism from Neo-colonialism. A core element of neo-colonialism is highly involving in political and economic control over a dependent territory; which is characterized by survival of the colonial structures, foreign investment and aid and dependency. As Sartre (2001) views that it is the geographical practice of using capitalism, business globalization, and cultural imperialism to influence a country, in lieu of either direct military control or indirect political control. Similarly, in the past this was done with military force, it is now done with economic and political control.

So Brown (1978) notes, it is the survival of the colonial system in spite of the formal recognition of political independence in emerging countries which become the victims of an indirect and subtle form of domination by political, economic, social military or technical measure. As the same time, it is an economic and political exploitative policy of developed countries, is fundamentally concerned with the control and manipulation of Africans and less technologically advanced nation by indirect ways. Further, concerning the neo-colonialism, it is the domination of a country through indirect means such as loans from international financial institutions. Therefore, African are said to be in a phase of neo-colonialism, a new form of imperial rule stage managed by the colonial overlord to give the colonized the false appearance of freedom, under the current global process.

4 GLOBALIZATION AS AN IDEOLOGICAL CONSTRUCT OF NEO COLONIALISM

Globalization as it is today is a complex and fluid concept. Globalization has an interchange of finance, culture, ideas, people, and information across the globe. The world is becoming a global village because of trade liberalization and financial integration, universalization of ideas of liberal democracy, cultural homogenization, and information communication technology across the globe.

Globalization is a subject of controversy, as it has brought many benefits to our world but also many disadvantages too. Though often touted as representing the height of economic rationality, globalization has also been portrayed as having a very dark side. As Lerche (1998) point out that the contemporary form of globalization, driven by economic power, clearly promotes the hegemony of western culture and corporations, puts jobs and communities at risk in the rich countries and exploits cheap labor in the poorer countries, increases threats to the environment, and undermines the foundations of democracy and social stability by subjecting natural political institutions to forces of economic change beyond their control.

However, the link between globalization and neo-colonialism requires further explication. Most of the literature distinguishes between neo-colonialism, which focus on economic and political control over dependent country, and others, which appear to be primarily economic, and the analysis that follows, adopts this approach while acknowledging that in practice the two elements are interrelated. It is concerning this, that spread of the ideas of neo-colonialism is the driving force of globalization, by creating a borderless world where the global replaces the local rational. These calculated methods the colonialist created situation, which enabled them to perpetuate their domination and exploitation of the Africans.

Drawing in this literature, this paper attempts to clarify various dimensions of globalization as agent of neo-colonialism and its negative potential for creating undemocratic values in Africa. The contemporary phenomenon of globalization is precisely the globalization of liberal capitalism and materialistic modernity. Free market was an instrument not only for raising living standard but also for knitting together our cold war allies and spreading the values and blessings of freedom to a wider circle of mankind. Increased trade and integration promote civic and political freedoms directly by opening a society to new technology and democratic idea. Nevertheless, free market is a central tenet of economic liberalism, and international institutions were designed to spread liberal values. A market imperative gives a good link to how democracy drives globalization. Therefore, the introduction of free market has constitutes the forces that propel the economic globalization process. Conceptually, free market is the absence of trade distorting policies such as taxes, laws, and regulation that give some companies or firms an advantage over others. Empirical evidence shows that these policies favor developed countries at the expenses of the developing ones. As observed by Harvey (2005) capitalist imperialism is dialectic of political actors that command a territory and capital accumulation in space and time. Free markets are not as free as one pretends. The G7 and the international financial institutions and Multi-nationals control

them. Thirlwall (2003) he goes on to state that developing countries depend on developed countries for resource flows and technology but developed countries depend heavily on developing countries for raw materials, food and oil and gas markets for industrial goods. This condition increases the economic inequality between western countries and Africans. The expanding income gap is not simply a result of the market economy itself but it is a result of the competitive political economy that is coupled with it. The wealthiest market actors define the market framework within which they accumulate wealth. This free market benefits and consequences are not uniformly experienced everywhere in the world. It is an uneven process and deceptive.

Similarly, Uduma (2004) notes, that bourgeoisie law equates individual legally but it cannot and does not set out to overcome economic inequality which is meritably inherent in capitalism and whose derivatives are all other forms of inequality including social, political, national, and cultural. The richer are getting rich and the poor are becoming poorer. Free market is a strategy of neo-colonialism that becomes an economic nightmare for the poor African countries. On the contrary, Grey (1999) advocates that globalization enhances efficiency by increasing competition among firms and induces learning and technology. He argues that reduction in trade barriers and transportation networks, which constitute the backbone of globalization, should lead to increased integration of various economies for the overall good. Then we ask these questions.

Obilor et al (2018) observed that, if globalization ensures people have their basic needs met and can it guarantee global socio-economic equality? Moreover, why is it that Africa continent still have the highest poverty rates in the globe? Or are there systematic social injustices in the global economy? Obviously, the simplistic notion of global economy also ignores the injustices of free market, which can lead to alienation and can undermine human dignity. However, rather than bringing and enhances welfare as claimed by its advocates, has caused tremendous poverty and polarization of the African economies with the developing countries at the receiving end (Eyo & Ogar, 2014).

Perhaps, more importantly, the primary task of any economic development seeks to eliminate poverty. That is to say, poverty is a form of economic deprivation. This free market has some serious effects on Africa countries. Dumping of cheap and substandard products from outside such items as clothes, shoes that flood markets in Africa. This undermines local industries that produce or intend produce the same products. This is evidence from the fact that the free market has contributed increased poverty in most African countries, through its effect in the economic inequalities and dependency theory. Africa was structured to be in perpetual dependence on advanced economies of the liberal capitalists, right from the colonial era.

In addition, the record of foreign aid to Africa is one of abysmal failure. This foreign aid now focuses in promoting certain changes in the developing countries that will enhance western economic expansion and dominance (Chima et al, 2018). Foreign aid is design to promote western donors economic interest around globe. As observed by Yansane (1980) international aid is based on profitability resulting from economic, political, or military calculation. Instead of increasing development, foreign aid has created dependence. No country can develop itself through aid or credit. The more foreign aid poured into Africa the lower its standard of living. Their gesture is not for mere humanitarianism purposes but rather mainly for economic exploitation and easy domination of Africa countries.

As notes by Rodney (1973) that a combination of poor politics and economics exploitation of Africa by Europeans led to the poor state of Africa political and economic development. Further as Offiong (1980) adds that these people promote their interests while simultaneously subjecting their countries to the dominance of these rich and powerful countries that control the international capitalist system. There is no doubt that Africans development plans are drawn thousands of miles away in the corridors of the IMF, World Bank and MNCs. The activities of these international institutions actually reinforces the present of the Neo-colonialism in Africa nations.

Originally, IMF and World Bank were formed to promote steady growth by offering unconditional loans to economics in crises and establishing mechanisms to stabilize exchange. Much of these economic visions never came to reality. It is widely accepted that most of the debts, as a cause of poverty in Africa, are due to the policies of the IMF and the World Bank. Seen in this way, Africa countries have deregulated foreign investment, liberalized their imports, removed currency controls, and have implemented all the economic policies of IMF and World Bank. Africa countries thought that the push for free market would improve economic conditions by creating a new middle class that would in turn bring democratic influence. In effect, MNCs have re-created the colonial hierarchy of spaces in new forms with the former imperialist countries on the top and the neo-colonies at the bottom. This undemocratic process carried out within a democratic facade, is consistent with the fact that globalization has been a tool serving neo-colonial interests. Again, somewhat paradoxically, globalization promotes opportunity for growth and increase in wealth; it has also increased the socio-economic disparity between people, making nations less democratic and progressively more ruled by the wealthy multinationals. The truth of the matter is that the policies of MNCs are inherently anti-democratic. Africa is just one example where World Bank and IMF involvement have been more destructive than beneficial. This is how globalization has impacted in Africa. As mentioned earlier, the economic dimension of globalization has attracted the most popular attention, much of which has been negative to Africans, due to the frequency and variety of inequalities for which the process is blamed. With this regard, it is difficult to ascertain whether globalization absolutely brings about the enhancement of the global unity.

In the world today, countries have been rooting for different ways of governing such as liberal democracy or communism. Globalization has brings a political tension when powerful nations are trying to creates a conflicting ideologies particularly in Africa. The principles of liberal democratic rule continue to radiate with enormous intensity in all cultural circles. Globalization may have spread democratic apparatus since most nations have fallen under the influence of democratic propaganda. It is in the process of spreading democracy that liberal democracies enter conflicts with non-democratic nations like Tunisia, Egypt, Libya. Democracy is widely understood to be a form of representative government

that is characterized by free and fair election, equality and guaranteed freedoms and rights. Indeed, guaranteeing rights beyond one's own borders were even one of the pretenses for the NATO invasion of Libya.

This has, in a sense, always been the case since capitalism replaced communism as the dominant system of government. Put very simply, Africa countries do not solve its own internal problems but is subject to neo-colonial powers at any moment. Western nation states expanded by destroying the sovereignty of other states through military intervention. However, military intervention is perceived as being highly selective. This cannot happen to world superpowers like Russia nor China. There is a general perception that intervention today is a tool of the neo-colonial powers. This undermines the principles of autonomy, is reduced by international law and human rights principles, which legitimate military intervention with states by the international community. Many questions have been raised without an answer. Is military intervention justified only where political and civil rights are being violated? What about violation of economic, social and cultural rights?

Following Albert Ogoko (2007), it could be further argues that political idea of globalization is the aggregation of complaint nations of the world into a community wherein their territorial boundaries dissolve into ideological insignificance while retaining their political sovereignty as independent nations. As Diamond (2008) posits it as racist system of exploitation and domination that was intrinsic to the very nature of colonial rule. In addition, Cerny (2010) points out that, there is a rapidly growing trend towards the erosion of national varieties of capitalism and the rise of a new neo-liberal hegemony rooted in globalization. Today, the world is interconnected in global political knowledge networks that reduce local autonomy and link the fates of people geographical remote from one another. Globalization is antithetical to localization in which individuals identify with exclusive communities that evaluate their wellbeing relative to outsiders. It is difficult to ignore the evidence that globalization undermines the struggle for the types of government that the Africa countries believe in. The motive force of the struggle for liberal democracy is the overwhelming power of the state and the possibility of its use of dominations, exploitation and oppression.

However, as Rawls (1999) has views that all reasonable persons would construct political ideals that benefit all, these ideals would be reached via overlapping consensus. The ideas and values of liberal democracy in the name of political globalization is another consolidation of neo-colonialism. This dominant ideology permeates every facet of human existence, taste, morality, customs and political principles. Such as individual rights and human rights regime that encourages same sex marriage and legalization of abortion. Globalization in its neo-colonial form is the carrier of values, which are essentially western in character, but they are being aggressively promoted internationally as universal values. Western dominant ethos and values as part of the political practice, determine what is normal, what is not normal. And this practice upholds western political norms and moral order as opposed to African cultures.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the logic of rational choices in the traditional Africa societies is significantly different from the individualistic moral reasoning in western liberal democracy. It has been repeatedly points out that globalization as an agent of neo-colonialism clearly promotes the hegemony of western cultures, put African communities at risk in the rich western countries, increases threats to the environment, and undermines the foundation of social stability by subjecting Africans to forces of socio-cultural and political change beyond their control. As Nick (2009) states that dominance of western states was marched by the apparent monopolization of western ideals as to how African states should be run and how relation these entities ought to be organized. Such as the emerging human rights, regime and western ideas have predominated. In general, the globalization value system, according to theoretical studies in their different contexts, includes great negativity. However, its positive values such as democracy, human rights are directional and cannot be considered as absolute.

Furthermore, colonial masters imposed states and political boundaries that inhabitants never fully accepted and that divided ethnic groups or enclosed ethnic rivals within the same states. Africans are becoming more alike and at the same time becoming more aware of our ethnic differences. The 1994 Rwanda genocide was between the Hutu and Tutsi, who developed entirely separate cultures and inevitably came into conflict with one another. Unfortunately, this democratic transition has not brought about the change that was hoped for in the perpetually conflict ridden Democratic Republic of Congo, where it is estimated that more than 6 million people have been killed. In addition, the genocide in Darfur has claimed 400,000 lives and displaced over 2,500,000 people. Globalization has intensified conflicts because of a backlash against encroachment of identity. Globalization imposes a convergence of values, which lead to ethnic conflicts in Africa.

As Kaldor (2006) notes that, the intensification of globe interconnectedness, political, economic, military and cultural and the changing character of political authority is transforming the nature of war. Globalization seems to be pulling virtually all identity groups on the planet out of their various degrees of isolation, pushing them into the currents of the global trends. War is an active part of globalization for the neo-colonialists to maintain their domination. This new wars need to be understood within the context of globalization. It has also resulted in terrorism, where fundamentalists of various kinds are prominent in the conflicts of cultural reactions. Significantly, this has created the rise of religion fundamentalism, easily associated with terrorism in different African countries as Boko-Haram in Nigeria, AL-Qa'ida AL-Shabaab in Somalia, and the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda.

Another paradoxical effect of globalization is the media proliferation and instant worldwide communication has become the norm and cultural imperialism is perhaps more significant now than ever before. Technological innovations in communication that accompany globalization help to spread democracy to African countries. New technologies such as e-mail, internet makes it easy for people to communicate quickly and efficiently all over the globe. Social media may have empowered people to stand up to the powerful but it has done nothing to strengthen the deliberative and representative processes of democracy. Face book and twitter, the two most prominent social networks and originated in America, played an important role in the Arab uprising. The internet revolution provides citizens new access to information and power of expression and is arguably enriching our thinking about society; even as it is redefining the

very notion of political community. Admittedly, it could argue that globalization had direct cultural effects. Internet serves to liberate the individual but then contrary to this view, what we paradoxically tend to see today is that rapid growth in information communication technology imprisons rather than liberate. The influence of the neo-colonial culture is rampant over the internet. It also affects the moral perception and the ethics of an average African. Consequently, it be a current expression of white supremacy with an enhanced technological capacity to impose itself on the Africa. For globalization, regardless of its disguises and deceptive on the spreading of civilization and technology, can be best understood as a neo-colonial project.

Furthermore, cultural hegemony is an aspect of Marxist philosophy that calls attention to the promotion of one culture over another with the objection of that the ruling class worldview becomes the norms (Bassey, 2019). As Simms (2003) rightly defines hegemony as cultural leadership exercised by the ruling class and that intellectuals sustain the dominant order by creating and popularizing a worldview that convinces the oppressed that their subordination is appropriate, inevitable and just. It could be noted that culture and language are pacesetters of our intellectual paradigms. It has been said that when one acquires a new language or culture, he ultimately acquires a new soul and of course, a new culture. As Maduagwu (1999) stress that the greatest consequence of globalization is that, like colonialism, it is going to spell the doom of weak indigenous cultures. But as globalization continues to eliminate Africa cultures; so Obiefuna and Ezeoba (2010) highlights some of its negatives effects to Africans, loss of indigenous languages, foreign names became synonymous with Christian names, traditional medicine are regarded as fetish.

Regrettably, though globalization has further consolidated the use of English and French languages as the official language across the continent. African culture is thought to lose some of its own cultural identity in the process. As language disappears, culture dies. Therefore, cultural imperialism is the bedrock of globalization. Africans have lost its values in the struggle with the trends of globalization. Globalization has succeeded in indoctrinating new cultures in our lives. The age long communal life of the Africans, which is generally known as extended family system is being looked down upon as primitive. These points indicate a need for new thinking about old questions, and in that sense, this calls for serious philosophical reflection but the truth remains that in our African context the ability to make connection between theory and facts is the key to radical tackling of problem of underdevelopment.

5 CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

As people, products, food, and capital travel the world in unprecedented numbers and at historic speed, so too do the myriad of diseases, environmental hazards, economic inequality, cultural imperialism, social and ethnic difference, and terrorism in Africa. As we have seen, globalization seems to be both creative and at the same time destructive but trying to distinguish its positive from its negative sides is demanding and controversial debates. Globalization may be a beautiful thing but it is definitely not a panacea. It is an enterprise that favors western cultures and it is the same old neo-colonialism with a new tool. Despite the failure of African socialism, there is an African way of development that is different from the western countries. Our development lies not only in our possessing rationality but it is our ability to cultivate mental independence by the reviving of indigenous knowledge and skills should be mounted and sustained, traditional medicine should be studied, developed and applied where appropriate, native languages should also be compulsory at any level of education; development of mineral refinement capacity, and rejection of the IMF and world bank counter developmental neo-liberal policies. It is in the stadium of mental independence that African's rationality wins its most precious laurel in the globe.

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